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AYS IN
CONSTRUCTIVE
THEOLOGY

GEORGE F. TERRY, F.S.A.



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ESSAYS IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

By

GEORGE F. TERRY,

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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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TO
MY WIFE
IN LOVE

PREFACE

“**W**HOEVER hesitates to utter that which he thinks to be the highest truth may re-assure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. He, like every other man, may properly consider himself as one of the myriad agencies through whom works the Unknown Cause; and when the Unknown Cause produces in him a certain belief, he is thereby authorized to profess and act out that belief. Not as adventitious, therefore, will the wise man regard the faith that is in him. The highest truth he sees he will fearlessly utter; knowing that, let what may come of it, he is thus playing his right part in the world—knowing that if he can effect the change he aims at—well; if not—well also; though not so well.”

So wrote Mr. Herbert Spencer in his *First Principles*, and in these essays which have

PREFACE

been prepared at different times for various audiences, clerical and lay, in the midst of a busy clerical life, I have only been anxious to express what I conceive to be the truth; and in doing this I should like to endorse the weighty words of Dr. Salmon, who, in his work on *The Infallibility of the Church*, so truly said that, "Conviction of the truth does not become ours at the command of some external authority. It grows by contributions from many sources: from the testimony of the past, from personal experience, from conscientious following of the light, from the influences exercised over us by our fellow men who are eminent for learning and goodness. It never ceases to grow as long as we are faithful to what we have attained, and though in this world it can never attain a logical completeness, the humble and patient will always find it sufficient for their practical need."

On looking over these papers for publication, I feel that my obligations to those "eminent for learning and goodness" are too many and too varied for full enumeration, but I desire to express my deep gratitude to all those whose wise thoughts and careful researches I have found most helpful.

PREFACE

The Essays in this volume are the expression of results which I have arrived at after studying and balancing the conclusions of many authorities. I make no pretension to originality; when a thing has been said by others better than I could say it, I have felt that those whom I addressed were entitled to hear it. Certain repetitions of thought and construction of argument have been unavoidable as each paper stands complete by itself.

I have entitled this book "Essays in Constructive Theology," because my constant aim has been to follow St. Paul's dictum, "*Let all things be done unto edifying*," and I am convinced that no realization of the truth ever leaves us stranded on the desert of finality, but rather carries us up and onwards; and as story by story the building arises, at each stage the view becomes wider and more magnificent.

It is by the repeated desire of my friends that these Essays are now published, and I trust that they and others who daily pray "Granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth," may find them helpful. They are addressed to all those who believe in the progressiveness of moral and spiritual know-

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ledge, and who believe that the movement of the ages is the ever-present activity of the Holy Spirit of God.

GEORGE F. TERRY.

EDINBURGH.

St. James' Day, 1914.

“O Lord God of Truth, I humbly beseech Thee to enlighten my mind by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may discern the true way to Eternal Salvation; and to free me from all prejudice and passion, from every corrupt affection and interest that may either blind or seduce me in search of it.

“Make me impartial in my inquiry after truth, and ready whenever it is discovered to me, to receive it in the love of it, to obey it from the heart, and to practise it in my life, and to continue steadfast in the profession of it to the end of my days.

“I resign myself, O Lord, to Thy conduct and direction, in confidence that Thy mercy and goodness is such that Thou wilt not suffer those who sincerely desire to know the truth and rely upon Thy guidance finally to miscarry. And if, in anything which concerns the true worship and service of Thee, my God, I am in any error and mistake, I earnestly beg of Thee to convince me of it, and lead me into the way of truth, and to confirm and establish me in it daily more and more.”

Private Prayer of ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON.

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THE CHRISTIAN
REVELATION OF GOD

“ From Him there began the interweaving of Divine and human nature, in order that the human, by communion with the Divine, might rise to be divine: not in Jesus alone, but in all those who not only believe, but enter upon the life which Jesus taught.”

ORIGEN. *Contra Celsum* iii. 28.

A king sang once
Long years ago—“ My soul is athirst for God,
Yea, for the living God ” ;—thy thirst and his
Are one . . .—Life is not enough,
Nor love, nor learning.—Death is not enough
Even to them, happy, who forecast new life ;
But give us now, and satisfy us now,—
Give us now, now !—to live in the life of God ;
Give us now, now !—to be at one with Him !

J. INGELOW.

“ The central object of the Christian faith is the Person of the Lord Jesus, in Whom was made the supreme revelation of God’s purpose to the world. No man’s faith is secure unless it rests on Him, and has become vital by spiritual experience. Let us remember that the meaning of Christianity is this: God manifested in Christ Jesus, Who is to us the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

BISHOP MANDELL CREIGHTON.

Essays in Constructive Theology

I

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OF GOD

THE religion of Jesus Christ does not apologize for itself; it does not stand on the defensive, or care to justify its presence in the world, for it speaks as something that has a right to mastery.

Still I have felt that it will be helpful to discuss some of the difficulties that men profess to find in the Christian revelation of God, and to suggest a way in which they can be met.

When the question is put to us, "*Canst thou by searching find out God?*" we must reply: it all depends upon the way in which you set about your search.

ESSAYS IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY .

Professor Gwatkin, in his Gifford lectures on "*The Knowledge of God*," truly reminds us that "The existence of God cannot be logically demonstrated. There are many proofs, but there is no demonstration ; and those who insist on having one must be plainly told that we have none to give. But neither can we logically demonstrate the existence of self or of the world—we cannot deduce it by self-evident logic in the style of Euclid, because we have no self-evident axioms behind it. The world, and self, and God, are alike in being final postulates of thought and therefore incapable of demonstration." But he further adds, "The existence of God is a final theory, not simply because we cannot get behind it, but because the personal action of such a Being is a true cause and final explanation of the universe, of persons as well as things. As all science assumes that nature is a rational system, so thought itself consciously or unconsciously assumes that there is a God."

So at the outset we must readily admit our own limitations. In the nature of things a finite mind can never do more than approximate to a knowledge of the Infinite ; always our knowledge of God

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must be partial, imperfect and relative; yet the main question before men's minds to-day is—Can we attain even to this partial knowledge? I think the true answer is that we can. For I am convinced that the hope which has sustained myriads of the noblest spirits in this dark world is a reality, and the power of God unto Salvation as true to-day as ever it was in past ages.

There is no purpose in denying that the modern study of nature and man, science and history, puts before us to-day a host of problems which crave an answer from every thoughtful mind. Among the solutions which are proposed as substitutes for the Christian religion, three appear to some as attractive from their apparent simplicity, and are worth a brief consideration.

One is called Materialism, the other Pantheism, the third Agnosticism: and they all deny the fundamental claim of our Faith.

1. Materialism repudiates the whole theological doctrine of a Creator and a moral providence; it admits no other existence than matter and force, and for these it offers no explanation.

Now I believe that as common-sense is one

of the chief features of our British character, it would be a mere waste of time to discuss the futility of this solution, for no one in his senses can look upon the orderly universe and then deliberately say, Nothing has originated all this; no living principle, no order or intelligence has been at work. Napoleon's question to his sailors on the voyage to Egypt silences the materialistic argument. You remember they were proving to their own satisfaction that the world was without a Creator, when Napoleon, pointing to the stars, quietly interposed, "Very ingenious, gentlemen; but who made all these?" The conception of matter without mind is unintelligible.

Materialism would gladly rid the unseen universe of the personal, but you cannot get rid of the personal anywhere so long as persons live in this universe.

For even if men cannot accept the solution which satisfies the Christian mind, most earnest thinkers are prepared to admit with Herbert Spencer: "The truth that there is an inscrutable existence everywhere manifested to which man can find neither beginning nor end. . . ." "There remains one absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of

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an Infinite and Eternal energy from which all things proceed."

So we may dismiss Materialism as the most irrational form of metaphysics—as an hypothesis altogether incapable of proof.

2. The second solution—Pantheism—asserts that all is God. But here again we have difficulties which increase the more seriously we consider them. We may admit truly enough that all is of God. "*All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.*" We acknowledge the immanence of God: "*In Him we move and live and have our being.*" But we do this only on the condition that we do not rob a single soul of its individuality and altogether absorb it in God; for to assert that "God is everything and everything is God" breaks down all differences between right and wrong and ends in the absurdity of identifying the worshipper with the Deity. Pantheism, it has been well said,¹ "promises that we '*shall be as gods*' ourselves, and it prevents us from becoming sons of God. It drowns us in Deity, and leaves us no sphere and no facilities through which we may hold

¹ A. H. Crawford, *Christian Instincts and Modern Doubt*, p. 124.

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communion with God. It depersonalizes us and turns us into things. It strips all peculiarity and all glory from our relationship to God. It renders us incapable of deliberate, rational and responsive sympathy with the Divine. It leaves us no will of our own to sacrifice to God. Our nobler elements are deprived of all special significance. We only live in God in the same sense as that in which the very foulest things live in Him. We are defrauded of our birthright." This being so, we may well dismiss Pantheism as a vain substitute for our faith.

3. Again many who are honestly perplexed at the difficulties of the problem find a refuge to-day in professed ignorance which they dignify by the title Agnosticism, a word, as Mr. Spurgeon once wittily remarked, which was only the Greek equivalent of the Latin *ignoramus*; and certainly "*ignoramus ignorabimus*" is a motto which does not give a hopeful outlook on life.

The full Agnostic position is one which, if universally accepted, would lead to a complete paralysis of thought and a speedy end of all progress; it is a position that owes its strength amongst other causes primarily to that misuse of theology which, for want

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of a better name, is called Clericalism. It is a protest against the dictum: "Let us maintain and enforce a thing before we have proved it." It is largely a reaction against presumptuous ignorance and sacerdotal arrogance.

Now in many ways a semi-Agnostic position is eminently acceptable to British religious feeling. Its intellectual modesty seems partly to recommend it. It appears almost as an incarnation of British caution.

Further, I think that difficulties as to the evidence for Christianity have much to do with the growth of semi-Agnostic ideas—and of these difficulties one class refers to the genuineness of the Bible records and the other to the fundamental idea of Christianity, that is, to its miraculous origin. These difficulties are worthy of fuller consideration.

As to the first difficulty, I will here content myself by saying that the whole of the result of the scholarly research during the last quarter of a century has been to strengthen rather than to weaken the historic value of the early records of Christianity. They come to us with the best credentials of truth. They are the writings of contemporaries, who

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in some cases were eye-witnesses of much that they relate, and each writer gives evidence of being a careful and truthful narrator of facts.

And as regards the second difficulty I want to restrict myself to one point in the discussion, and that is the probability of a revelation of God to man.

Here let me say that if we assume the whole universe to be the work of God, I trust also we may assume that He has not given over this planet of ours to any hostile power.

Now if these assumptions be granted I think we may find in Nature and in human nature the expression of God in a form capable of being perceived by us.

From Nature we may learn much. It discloses to us a mighty and far-reaching system of education. The present is the offspring of the past—the heir of all its opportunities, of its progress and even of its errors. We see the same law of growth and development which has been concentrated in the brief span of our earlier life, operating through myriads of years, as race after race of higher powers and more perfect organization comes forth, fulfils its time and then

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falls into the background, to give place to something yet nearer to perfection.

We can none of us say of anything in nature that the limit has been reached and that further progress is impossible. The teaching of experience and the logic of facts repudiate such an idea.

Human history points out just as clearly the moral development of the race as the book of nature points out the natural development.

Moral progress is a fact in the world's history, though the principles to which it is due are not taught by the physical order.

Now these two facts of Nature and History are, I believe, the best starting-points, apart from Revelation, of our knowledge of God.

First the law of Nature—"the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being," and secondly, the law of History—"the stream of righteousness," the growth of moral law, of right and wrong which implies an Influence and Power to whom mankind stands in a different relationship from that of other beings in the physical world. We find in ourselves desires and capacities which can only be satisfied by a

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sense of relationship with a Power far higher than ourselves—a faculty of religiousness—the need of an object of worship, of an ideal Being which is to be like the Sun of man's moral system. Dean Mansel, in *Limits of Religious Thought*, says, "Man feels within him a consciousness of a Supreme Being, and the instinct of worship, before he can argue from effects to causes or estimate the traces of wisdom and benevolence scattered through the creation."

Now this being so—and few will seriously deny it—both Nature and History are unanimous in teaching that no demand ever exists without the possibility of supply.

If there are physical wants and moral wants which may be satisfied and attained, on what grounds can anyone assert that the religious wants and ideals are mere illusions? This is an argument that is practically unanswerable.

When the greatest of modern physicists, Charles Darwin, said, "The question whether there is a God or not is one which has been answered in the affirmative by the highest intellects who ever lived," he took his stand upon the general consciousness of the race, as it was reflected by the greatest intellects

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who ever lived, and we Christians may well take the same standpoint.

The longing after God exists, and when God willed to satisfy this longing we Christians believe that "*in the fullness of time,*" He transmitted His message along the best conductor that He could have. He Himself took our nature upon Him and became man, flesh of our flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Professor Gwatkin reminds us that, "We must never forget that our Lord came not to found a religion, but to be Himself the revelation. Two simple rites excepted, we cannot trace to Him any ceremony of worship, or even any definite command to hold common worship at all. He did not come even to teach morality, but to reveal the love of God by words and deeds and loving signs, and to give His life in life and death for every man. So the person of the Lord is itself the revelation, and the historic facts through which we know Him constitute the Gospel. The dogmas of churches are their interpretations by men, representing all degrees of certainty from the Lord's divinity down to transubstantiation. Thus all specifically Christian theology is an expansion of "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*"

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The central truth of the Christian revelation is that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, "*Perfect God and Perfect Man.*"

And here we must remember that as Dr. Inge truly says,¹ "God as an object of worship—the God of all religion—is not the Absolute, but the highest form under which the Absolute can manifest Himself to finite creatures in various stages of imperfection." So although we cannot know God as He is absolutely in Himself, we can know Him as He is in human flesh, under the limitations and conditions of human life.

For God has other Words for other worlds,
But for this world the Word of God is Christ.

Hence the answer to the question, What is God like? can only be Jesus Christ. So St. John writes—

"*No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,*" and His declaration is "*God is love.*"

Now this is what Agnostics call anthropomorphism, or dragging down the Almighty to our own level ; but, surely, our Religion

¹ *Contentio Veritatis*, The Person of Christ.

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demands a personal object ; it is committed to a belief in the moral relationship between God and man, and so long as philosophy has no room for a personal God, religion must exclude such philosophy. The whole issue of our controversy with Agnosticism lies here ; if the belief in a personal God is to be called anthropomorphism, then let us not be ashamed to admit that religion is hopelessly anthropomorphic.

We are told that the Infinite cannot be personal, because personality implies limitation ; but, surely, this is the Agnostic's limitation, not ours. When we talk of personality we do not mean our own personality ; it is enough for us to know that God's personality meets ours and knows ours. The All, to be All, must contain personality. It must express itself by personality. The ultimate Reality is the source of all our justice and all our forgiveness, just as much as it is the source of our mind and reason and physical force. Love, justice and forgiveness are the functions of a Person, but the Personality that on one of its sides reaches down to the level of our consciousness is not limited by our consciousness. This charge of anthropomorphism is only another illustration

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of the want of exactness in so-called exact thinkers; they cannot distinguish between two different kinds of anthropomorphism; the one ascribes to God all that is lowest in humanity, the other all that is highest.

Men have often ascribed to God their own evil passions and their own petty meannesses, and no words can be too strong for the denunciation of this kind of blasphemy. But we must remember that, all through the ages, men's conceptions of God have been necessarily coloured by the circumstances of their lives and the customs of their age.

We see this clearly as we look over the Old Testament records, and even in more modern times. To take one example: in days when the Divine Right of Kings was firmly believed, and when the aristocracy were the recipients of all favours and privileges, and the great mass of the people counted for nothing, the doctrine that the elect few were saved and the many fore-ordained to damnation and hell-fire flourished, and presented no moral difficulty. The Roman inquisitors thought themselves far more merciful than their God, for they burned men and women alive in the hope that, by suffering on earth after confession and penitence, they might escape

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the eternal suffering which God was sure to inflict on all heretics; even if their victims were impenitent, they felt that they were only adding for the good of the Church a few hours to their eternal torture.

Now, inasmuch as Agnosticism is a protest against these low views of our Almighty and All-Loving Father, it is perfectly legitimate; for it reminds us that we are all the children of our own age—the men of our own times. The conceptions of God held in the Middle Ages are now quite impossible to us; for instance, Anselm's theory of the Atonement offers to us a God with the sentiments of a mediæval baron, jealous of personal honour and determined to vindicate it with blood; but this eleventh-century God is not ours, for, whilst there are limitations still with us that we cannot overstep, I believe that one of the prime factors in the great change which is seen to-day of ideas about God is due to the influence of political development on the conception of the knowledge of God. This influence can be illustrated in a very few words.¹ That which is unworthy of man at his best cannot be worthy

¹ See Professor Gwatkin's *The Knowledge of God*, vol. ii, Lecture xxiv.

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of God. If a good man will not turn away from the appeal of ignorance and misery for help, we may be sure that God will not be deaf to the cry that cometh up from earth to heaven.

It is here, then, that we have the great significance of the Incarnation, for it was a revelation that God was not merely an impersonal drift of tendency, but a Person, and as such One in Whom all human persons were destined to find complete satisfaction. Christ does not give us mere information about God, but, being Himself God, He reveals God. "*In Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily*;" in Christ we have the Fatherhood of God revealed, and He has taught us that God is love.

So, the All Great, were the All Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!"
Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself!
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me Who died for thee!"

Now this supreme revelation of Jesus is the one firm and substantial ground of our faith in God. Much that we cannot understand in the world is explained when we

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OF GOD

learn through Jesus to look upon God as our loving Father. It is natural that the child cannot fully grasp the mind and actions of his father; but surely it is enough for us to know that the great Creator Father has revealed Himself to us as Incarnate Love, and we are never nearer to God than when in silence of the understanding we simply feel our dependence on that Fatherly love which never faileth, and believe that the human affections of Christ are God's affections, that His sufferings are God's sufferings, and His love is always and for ever God's love.

Looking back over the ages, we find that, when this revelation of Jesus Christ was first proclaimed, it greatly enlarged the older Jewish belief in God. The Apostles had to relearn their Jewish faith in one God, in the light of their new convictions concerning Jesus Christ; whilst Pentecost added another interpreting and enlarging factor, for the Apostles and their earliest converts found themselves in the presence of a Divine Power, helping, inspiring, and strengthening; the Holy Spirit sent from the Father by the Risen Christ. Hence their belief in God had to include their belief in the Divine Christ and the Divine Spirit. A threefold

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Divine activity was discovered in the Christian experience, and in process of time this became expressed in the Christian Creed.

Our Christian doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere intellectual puzzle for dogmatists ; it is a doctrine that had its origin in the facts of God's revelation of Himself in the historic Personality of Jesus Christ. But it is more than a doctrine of God's manifestation of Himself ; it teaches that there are distinctions within God Himself. For not only historically has God manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but we believe that God always was Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; that in His essence He is eternally Triune and eternally One.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the expression of a belief that Divine life as well as human life has a social element in it, and that as such it is of immense importance, for it implies that in all relationships, Divine as well as human, there are mutual duties. A God whose relations are as binding for Himself as for His creatures is neither the inscrutable emptiness of the Pantheist, nor the inscrutable Power of the Latin or Mohammedan, but always and for ever a loving All-Responsible Father to His erring children.

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OF GOD

Now our reasons for thinking Jesus Divine—the supreme revelation of God—have been well summed up under four heads by Dr. Inge.¹

“(a) If Christ did not claim to be the Son of God, in a sense which applied to Himself alone, the Gospels are too untrustworthy to have any historical value.

“(b) There is one essential attribute of Divinity which Christianity can never consent to surrender in the case of Christ—namely, His sinlessness. If he was a sinner like ourselves, then the union between God and man, which Christianity asserts to be a fact, is still an unrealized ideal.

“(c) The voluntary humiliation of the Lord of all is an integral part of Christianity.

“(d) The highest, most distinctive, and most potent parts of His teaching are bound up with the personal claim.”

And these reasons are based on solid facts which any one can see for himself. I take leave to indicate them briefly, for they are of the greatest importance to our faith.

As Christians our position is just this—the final and living authority for our religion is

¹ Inge, *Contentio Veritatis*, The Person of Christ, p. 99.

Jesus Christ, as presented to us historically in the New Testament and especially in the four Gospels; further, we find that Jesus Christ is authenticated to our reason by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our own personal experience.

I. The first fact is the New Testament itself; there can be no doubt it exists—it has existed for nearly two thousand years. It is a world's book. And as a passing thought, it is marvellous with how few words the New Testament accomplishes its magnificent effects. I have seen it stated somewhere that, whereas Shakespeare uses about 21,000 words and Milton, 13,000, the whole of our Authorized Version only uses 6,000, proving, as Goldsmith says, "that eloquence is not in the words but in the subject." For our argument all questions of authorship do not matter; let us take it simply as a fact.

On glancing through it we see that it contains twenty-seven pieces of writing—four of them are fragments of a biography, twenty-one of them are letters—one a chapter of history and the last a volume of prophetic writing.

These twenty-seven books were written by nine men, and all these men are writing

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about one Person. They unite in painting a portrait—the most marvellous historic portrait in the world of the one Supreme Personality of human history; and in this Personality we have the uniting medium between God and man. These works tell us about a life which began with one miracle and ended with another. And as we read the varied accounts of the life in the gospels, we feel that the miraculous element is not only credible, but reasonable; it is what a truly historic study of Christ's personality and character would lead us to expect. To expect only the ordinary from the extraordinary is unreasonable; we expect the extraordinary to produce the extraordinary. For in Christ was dwelling all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In Christ, our Creator has taken upon Himself the nature of the man He created, and the gospel assures us that in doing this He did not take something that was alien or contrary to His Divine Nature; He only took upon Himself the finite form of which He Himself was the Infinite.

When we hear men discussing the miracles of the New Testament, we should remember that there is really only one miracle, and that

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is Jesus Christ Himself. The other recorded miracles would never have gained the slightest acceptance had it not been for their connection with this miracle. There is only one miracle that really matters to the Christian, and that is the miracle of Jesus Christ; and this miracle, I hope to show, accompanies the Church all through history, and renews the wonder of the Gospel in every believer's experience.

The Gospels report many words which this Man spake—and His words are even more wonderful than His deeds; when we take His words and study them, one thing becomes very clear. This Person makes tremendous claims upon the minds and hearts of men. He says, Come to me and I will refresh you. Follow me—I will strengthen you. Authority was the mark of Christ to the men of His own age. "*He taught them as having authority, and not as one of the Scribes . . .*" "*Never man spake like this man,*" and some of His last recorded words strike the same note, "*All authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth.*"

Now this testimony to Christ, as the direct and final authority for Christianity, was first given in oral form. It was preached long

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before it was written. The men who laid the foundations of the Christian Church took Jesus Christ at His word and believed that He was all that He said He was.

II. And the Church so founded is my second Fact. The Christian Church is an argument which the Christian man must ask unbelievers to face. Well does Mr. B. H. Streeter sum up this mighty fact when he writes,¹ "To found an institution which shall outlive the centuries, to create an influence which shall dominate the future, to mould the mind and outlook of mankind, to leave a name which posterity shall venerate with wonder and admiration—this has from the beginning been the ambition of emperors, statesmen, and warriors with nations and armies at their back to achieve their aim; it has been the ambition of thinkers and poets with all the wisdom and culture of the ages at their command. In the roll-call of fame are names like Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon. There are names like Plato and Kant, Newton and Darwin, Dante and Goethe, and on the history and the mind of our race each of these has left a great and enduring mark. They have left their mark; their name

¹ *Foundations*, p. 144.

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and their influence is still a power. But which of them has done a work, has left an influence or a name like the village Carpenter, unlettered and unarmed, Who dreamed that God would redeem the world through Him, and died to make the dream come true? ”

I hold that we cannot look upon the Church as a human institution, but rather as the special creation of Christ for the fulfilment and fruition of His work. The union of the Divine and Human is the keynote not only of the Person of Christ but also of the Divine Society He founded. The Church is the one great Society which Christ founded to proclaim and carry on His redeeming work, and it does not depend for its distinctive character on the men who join it; that character is given to it by Christ alone. The Church was founded by the Life, the Teaching, the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and by the consequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit; it was not made by man; its first members did not construct it, but joined it. Christ is the whole life of the Church, and our function is to receive life from Him, to express His Truth, and to realize His Purpose, according to our capacities. Hence the function of the Church all through the ages is to

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witness for Christ in the world ; the Church is to aim at the production and development of men and women of Christian character, who shall be known as Christians wherever they go, and by all that they say and do. This leads us to our third fact.

III. That is the constant individual experience. It is the Christian heart all through the ages. Here we reach the great foundation ; for the best attestation of our religion is not to be found in its so-called "Evidences," but in the spirit ; for only spirit can recognize spirit.

I believe that no one can really believe in the Divine Lordship of Jesus Christ, unless he is assured that Jesus is now living and exercising Divine authority. This assurance must be direct to our own souls ; it must offer fresh demonstrations daily to our own religious experience.

Christianity is not built on a book but on the heart. Read the Book, and you will see that Peter and John and Paul all base their preaching on personal experience ; for Christianity is a fact of Spiritual experience ; it is a relation between God and the Soul, realized in various forms ; each apostle unites in saying, "*I know Whom I have believed,*"

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for, "*it pleased God to reveal His Son in me.*" And so in one sense the whole of the New Testament is the earliest literature of Christian experience. The experience of the first century has been repeated in every age.

The Divine revelation is an eternal revelation. It has been going on from the beginning, it is going on now.

The Bible properly read, that is read in the historical sequence of its books, offers the most striking illustration in literature of the spiritual evolution which constitutes the religious history of the world.

The Church shows throughout its history the marks of time and steady growth. The Reformation is now just as permanent in the Church as in Christianity. It is Christianity restoring itself by its own inherent strength.

And the Christian experience, which was the experience of the Apostles themselves, is a constantly recurring experience. Every century that passes adds conviction to the vindication of our Master's claims.

The miracle of Christianity, the most convincing proof that it offers us a Divine answer to the enigma of life, is the truth of Christian experience—the experience of men

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and women who have lived and died in dependence on a living God through a living Christ in conscious communion with a Spirit of Divine light and strength and comfort.

It is impossible to believe that those who out of love and compassion have done most for the human race have been the victims of a form of insanity. We cannot believe that those who have proved themselves to be sane and practical in every other sphere of life are deluded in their strong conviction that God is with them. The results of Christian faith are indeed the strongest arguments for its reasonableness.

If we want the cream of the Christian experiences of the centuries, we have only to realize how completely at home all devout souls find themselves in the great Spiritual classics, such as *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Serious Call*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*; or we have only to open any hymn book, for it is in the poetry of the Church that the Christian heart finds its fullest expression.

And here we find that all shades of opinion are fused in a common love. A. M. Toplady, a Calvinist, writes for all time "Rock of ages, cleft for me;" Charles Wesley, the Methodist poet, "Jesu, lover of my soul;" John New-

ton, the Evangelical and reformed godless sailor, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds;" St. Bernard, a Roman Catholic, "Jesu, the very thought of Thee;" John Keble, an orthodox English scholar, "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear;" Horatius Bonar, a staunch Presbyterian, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto Me and rest." Calvinist and Methodist, Anglican and Presbyterian, Romanist and Evangelical, all are one in Jesus Christ. All can repeat the earliest Christian experience and say it has "*pleased God to reveal His Son in me.*"

And they stammer in their efforts to express what they feel; they are unable to put into verse the full adoration of the redeemed heart.

It is for Christians to-day to carry on this glorious experience. When men say to us as the Greeks of old, "*Sirs, we would see Jesus,*" it is for us to show by our lives that we know Him and have given Him the adoration of ourselves, our souls and bodies.

We each one are made for God, and our hearts can find no peace till they rest in Him. The revelation of God must come to our own lives and in our own experience until we can say, "*The life which I now live in the flesh*"

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*I live by faith of the Son of God Who loved me
and gave Himself for me," "for it hath pleased
God to reveal His Son in me."*

So shall we understand the truth of Whittier's lines—

The dear Lord's best interpreters
Are humble human souls ;
The Gospel of a life like theirs
Is more than books or scrolls.
From scheme and creed the light goes out,
The saintly fact survives :
The blessed Master none can doubt
Revealed in holy lives.

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“ Why should attempts at further elucidation be discouraged, as if in searching the Scriptures we ought to stop at the sense in which our fathers understood them ? and, as if already possessed of all the information that could be given, to imagine that no new accession of light could arise from a new investigation of the original, or the writings of the rabbins ? These were much more accustomed than Christian commentators to dwell upon and to catch the rays of light which are reflected from the Hebrew.”

BENNET, *Olam Haneshamoth.*

“ By identifying the new learning with heresy, you make orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance.”

ERASMUS.

“ A thinking man is the worst enemy the Prince of darkness can have.”

CARLYLE, *Sartor Resartus.*

“ Deliver me, O Lord, from the narrowing influence of human lessons, from human systems of theology ; teach me directly out of the fulness and freeness of Thine own Word. Hasten the time when, unfettered by sectarian intolerance, and unawed by the authority of men, the Bible shall make its rightful impression upon all the simple and obedient readers thereof, calling no man Master but Christ only.”

CHALMERS.

II

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ON a previous page I said that one of the outstanding facts on which the revelation of God in Jesus Christ rested was the New Testament records.

In this chapter I want to put before you the fresh light that has been brought to bear on these records by the work of the Higher Critics.

The Higher Critics have now been at work on our scriptures for over two hundred years.

Fifty years ago the Tübingen School, with Strauss and Baur as its great exponents, was dominating the theological scholarship of Europe ; and under its destructive criticism the minds of good men were considerably disturbed ; but the fresh investigation which Baur's theories called forth has resulted in the vindication of the substantial truth of the

Gospel narratives; it has reconstructed for us the contemporary background of the New Testament, and brought into clearer prominence, the Person, the Work, and the Teaching of our Lord Himself; and so Modern Criticism has become one of the most powerful weapons for the defence of positive Christianity.

Now when we think of it, we realize that this could hardly have been otherwise. Bishop Lightfoot, in his work on *Supernatural Religion*, well said of the Tübingen theories, "There is at least a presumption that the historical sense of seventeen or eighteen centuries is larger and truer than the critical insight of a section of men in one late half-century"; and since this sentence was written Professor Harnack has confirmed the bishop's words by declaring that the tradition of the Church from the beginning as to the date and authorship of the New Testament books was nearer the truth than the theories of Tübingen.

Scholars are to-day studying the Bible as it has never been studied since the last book in it was written, and they know, as was never known before, how the various books came to be. It is no exaggeration to say

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that they have made the Bible a new book for the Christian world.

And when I say the Bible is a new book for this age, let it be clear that I mean it is our conception of the Bible that is new and not the book itself. To-day we think of the Bible differently from the way in which our forefathers thought, but the Bible remains unchanged, for nothing very substantial has been cut out of it, and certainly nothing new has been put in it. It is a fact that to-day we cannot look at anything in the same way that men did fifty years ago. We have a new knowledge of the body and a new knowledge of the mind, as well as a new knowledge of the past ages, and the conception of the Bible that is now dominating the thought of intelligent men in the Christian world is as different from the conception which was held by our fathers, as the medicine and surgery of to-day are different from what they were fifty years ago.

To-day we know that the Gospel, the personal teaching of Christ, has passed through four great transformations. First, from its original state into Catholicism; secondly, from Catholicism into the compact structure of Mediævalism; thirdly, from Mediævalism in the sixteenth century to Protestantism;

and, fourthly, in our own time into a larger and more spiritual atmosphere, a standpoint rather than a Creed. This last represents, I believe, more truly the temper of Christ than the ecclesiasticism of the intermediate periods.

We have therefore the old Bible and the new conception of it; yet there is a vague impression that the Higher Critics, and specially certain learned men in German Universities, men like Harnack, Schweitzer and Eucken, have made some discoveries of an unknown nature which in some way or other have undermined the authority of the Bible, and therefore there is an uneasy doubt as to whether the gospel of the New Testament is to be "*the power of God unto Salvation*" for the modern man.

Now I am convinced that this kind of fear is a far greater enemy to our faith than intellectual doubt.

Christians of all people ought to be positive and radiant; they must know themselves, and be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them. If they are nervous and hysterical they will never be able to do their work in the world effectively.

There are dangers ahead due to the loosening of social and industrial forces which

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are working in directions which must be curbed if we are to avoid destruction. These forces can only be faced and overcome by Christians who are sure of themselves.

The Church of this century must be a Church of power, and power is always conditional on the clearness of our conception of truth. If a man has come to distrust the essential gospel of the Spiritual life, he must become either a neutral unsympathetic observer of the world, or a pessimist, the terrified slave of physical nature ; there is no middle ground for such people.

Religion is not a matter of opinion ; it is a matter of conviction. And I am well assured that the lack of conviction in our midst to-day is not owing to the work of the Higher Critics, but is due to our own mental indolence. I do not say ignorance, although ignorance is often combined with indolence ; but, whereas ignorance may often be a misfortune, mental indolence is always a vice.

In all religious questions we must be willing to take trouble to inquire, to examine facts, and to clear our minds of prejudice, and so exercise responsibility for our own private judgment.

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There is a famous scene in Puritan history which finely illustrates this. In Neal's *Puritans* we read that when the Pilgrim Fathers were about to sail from Delft for America their pastor, John Robinson, the father of the Independents, made the following speech :—

“Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more the God of Heaven only knows ; but whether the Lord has appointed that or no, I charge you before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow Christ. If God reveal anything to you, by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth of my ministry, for I am very persuaded the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word.”

These words of the old Puritan preacher, spoken in 1620, are as true and noble as if spoken to us to-day. It is this temper of mind which we should earnestly desire and cherish in view of the many new channels by which the Holy Spirit of God is pouring in us the light of new knowledge.

The Christian who has a strong and intelli-

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gent faith will neither denounce the Higher Criticism nor seek to hide its results ; he will rather believe that it is quite possible to accept all that is true in the New Learning, and yet retain a living faith in the Bible. For he will be convinced that truth can never be opposed to truth and he will remember that Christ—the Truth Incarnate—commissions all genuine scientific investigation and gathers into His message all the sound conclusions to which it leads.

It is impossible to-day for any Christian to debar scientists from the study of the Gospels on the plea that they are inspired writings, because Christianity cannot claim to be historical and at the same time refuse examination of its historical sources. We must therefore treat the Gospels as we would treat any other historical writings ; we must honestly strive to get at facts and treat the evidence for these facts on its own merits, believing that Truth is always Truth. Truth to us is the thing we believe, the thing which brings to the mind its own irresistible proof. Clement of Alexandria defined faith itself as “ the attitude of receptivity towards truth,” and truth itself has been well defined as “ the revealing of God—God in His becoming.”

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When a Christian student was once asked to name the best book on the Divine origin of the Bible his reply was, the Bible itself : for the Bible carries its own authority, it appeals to the heart just as colour appeals to the eye, and it is its own revelation.

Now as concerning the subject before us, let us know clearly what we mean when we talk about modern Criticism. And first, as regards the word "criticism," do not let us confuse the word with fault finding ; criticism literally means " the forming of a judgment," and in the literary sense it means the scholarly investigation of any book or document with the view of learning something definite about it. So Biblical criticism is neither finding fault with the Bible nor sitting in judgment on the Bible, as regards merit or demerit ; it is neither scepticism nor speculation.

The aim of criticism is to arrive, by a careful examination of the documents themselves, at the exact history of each book in the Canon of Scripture, and so to estimate the varying degrees of weight to be attached to each work. Now it is not claimed that everything that calls itself Criticism deserves our assent ; in theology as in other sciences there must be a consensus of scholars before the

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Church need concern itself with their results. There will always be certain people who love to put forward startling hypotheses, but in the long run it is always the truth that establishes itself.

The Anglican Church at the Reformation freely welcomed the new light that came from the recovered knowledge of Greek, and fearlessly appealed behind the traditions of the Mediæval Church to the original deposit in the Bible, interpreted by the new learning. To-day a similar situation has to be faced owing to the same cause, an improved method of interpretation, and a more accurate system of examining the structure and contents of the books of the Bible.

This process of criticism is divided into two branches, distinguished by the technical terms, the Lower and the Higher.

The Lower Criticism has to investigate questions of words and texts. The critic in this branch makes it his business to find out as nearly as possible what is the correct text. It is his task to study the various texts, and make careful examination and comparison of all the ancient manuscripts, and to discover what are the original words which the author really wrote ; he has further

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to find out if any alterations have been made, either accidentally or purposely, in the text as it has come down to us.

Remember that there are thousands of manuscripts of the Bible preserved in the world. Of the New Testament alone, 3,829 manuscripts had been catalogued by the year 1901, and more have been added since then. Now hardly any two of these manuscripts agree; there are tens of thousands of verbal variations, letters and words are dropped out of some of them, others have sentences transformed and mangled by the carelessness of the original scribes who copied them; so that now all these manuscripts have to be compared one with another, and by this comparison scholars are able to make out what was most probably the text written by the author. The men who do this sort of work are called Textual Critics, or Lower Critics, because they simply deal with the letter of the Bible and not with its spirit. The abiding result of this textual science for our generation is to be seen in the Revised Version of the Bible.

It is only after the true text has been made out that the work of Higher Criticism begins. The Higher Critics have a wider

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field and deal with larger questions. They have to set the book or writing in its place amongst other writings, they have to investigate the problems that arise concerning authorship and age, and the relationship of parts to the whole, and of the whole to kindred literatures. The Higher Critics not only ask who wrote the words, but they put the further question, Are the thoughts and words to be reconciled with what we know of the date, circumstances and personality of the reputed author? And all this is important simply because the temper of our age is not satisfied with tradition, but wants verification; in other words, it wants knowledge where possible, and adequate reasons for its faith.

Now these two branches of literary criticism have been long applied to all secular books.

Many learned men have spent their lives in discussing such questions as whether the poems of Homer were really written by Homer or by some other author of the same name: the same has been done for the works of Shakespeare, and it seems difficult to see that anyone should have any objection to this reverent and careful investigation of the historical circumstances in which it pleased the Holy Ghost to speak to men of old time,

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the prophets, apostles and evangelists, who wrote the various books which compose our modern Bible. As a matter of fact, those who have most strongly attacked the Higher Criticism have been those who have least understood it.

I am convinced that the first condition of the sound interpretation of the Bible is honest and thorough criticism, because ultimately all our religious discussions turn on the treatment of the Sacred Text. It is beyond question that within the last two generations much of the traditional treatment of the Bible has become impossible, and it is very saddening to think that much of the current preaching and teaching of religion to-day is only tolerated because the religious public prefers to remain in wilful ignorance of the assured results of Biblical Science.

It is owing to this ignorance that there is so much prejudice against the critical study of the Bible and so much stupid fanaticism which passes for piety.

The Higher Critics' aim is solely to discover and make known the truth, in the firm conviction that the truth is of God, and may be trusted to do God's work in the souls of men who are brought to understand it;

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and I hold it to be the duty of every honest Christian teacher to let his hearers know the assured results of modern criticism. It is his duty to speak the truth without fear or favour, to proclaim to his own age the truth as God has revealed it by His Holy Spirit.

Now what have the Higher Critics done? The destructive side of their work has been mainly in relation to certain theories and interpretations never really authorized by the Church or forming part of its essential Belief ; their work has had to do with the intellectual setting of the faith rather than with faith itself—when they have been tempted to do more, they have mistaken their own province.

In the first place they have shattered altogether the old doctrine of verbal inspiration.

Verbal inspiration was an heritage we received from Romanism, derived from Judaism of about the time of the return from the Babylonish captivity ; I have no hesitation in saying that we are well rid of it. Whenever it has been accepted it has always blighted spiritual life. The Pharisees, we know, became worshippers of a book instead of worshippers of God, and our Lord's sternest words were spoken about their

blindness and stupidity. The Fathers of the Latin Church fell into the same error, and in the sixteenth century, at the time of the Reformation, when Christians had to fight an infallible Church, they found the easiest way to do this was by proclaiming an infallible Book ; but to-day verbal inspiration is no longer allowed by scholars of any influence on interpretation. It cannot establish the truthfulness of any statement against the verdict of historical criticism ; it cannot authorize any doctrine which has against it the reason and the conscience of Christian men. “ Proof Texts ” are to-day at a discount, and the books of Scripture must stand on their own merits.

And here again the fact has been established, that all the books of the Bible are not of equal value.

The Old Testament is not on a level with the New Testament ; the book of Ecclesiastes is not on a level with the writings of the Prophet Isaiah, nor is the Epistle of St. Peter on a level with the Gospel of St. Mark ; in fact, the books which make up the Bible are of very unequal merit, and this is so because the Bible is a record of a revelation that is progressive.

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We must remember that the Bible was not produced instantaneously ; for at least fifteen hundred years it kept on growing, so that it is natural to find advancing stages of an unfolding life. We find in the Old Testament moral sanctions which a progressing race has left long behind ; the ritual legislation of Moses became obsolete long ago ; there is a vast distance between the records of wholesale slaughter by the Israelites and other barbaric deeds of treachery and cruelty, and Jesus praying for His enemies on the Cross.

To-day no one dare suggest that slavery and polygamy are to be justified because they existed in the Bible records, nor would anyone be listened to who urged on the authority of the Old Testament that the burning of witches was a Christian duty.

Many of the Biblical writings are now known to be composite in their structure, and consist of ancient documents and traditions woven together by some later editor. For instance, in the Pentateuch, there are found at least five documents : (1) the Jehovistic document (J.E.), which is made up of a Judean Jahvistic writing (J.), and (2) an Ephraimite Elohist writing (E.) ; (3) Deutero-

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nomy (D.) ; (4) the Priestly Code (P.), including (5) the law of Holiness (H.).

In some of the historical books of the Old Testament we have sometimes contradictory accounts of the same event. Many of the prophetic books are held to contain certain prophecies from more than one hand. Isaiah is clearly divided into two parts, one of which contains the words of the prophet whose name the whole book bears, and the other the writing of some unknown prophet who wrote during the Exile and after the Restoration of the Jews.

From this it follows that we cannot regard all the books of the Bible as primarily historical ; for, as some of them were written long after the events they describe, it is easy to see how inaccuracies have crept in which would not have been present if the writings had been the works of eyewitnesses.

Then the Higher Critics have completely changed our ideas of the nature of prophecy. Formerly the prophet was imagined to be one who foretold the future, the man who saw the course of history centuries ahead ; now we understand that the prophet is a man who had a message from God to the men of his own age. This did not prevent

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him from having a clear insight that would bear fruit in the future into God's judgments on his contemporaries, although his main concern was always with the circumstances of his own day, as seen in the light of God's will. We know the prophet now as a "forth-teller" rather than a "fore-teller" of God's purpose.

Again, the work of the Higher Critics has made it quite clear that the Bible is not an authority on Science. We are no longer troubled by the difficulty of making the childish theories of the Universe found in the Bible fit in with the discoveries of modern Science. It is now generally understood that a divinely inspired book, full of infallible statements on matters of history or Science, would be useless; it would take away all incentive to research and study.

We understand now quite clearly that the whole aim of the Bible is to reveal God, and, in doing this, we are struck with the extraordinary unity of purpose which welds the manifold parts of the Bible into one organic whole. Each event in Jewish history is found, when placed on record, to contribute unconsciously something to the progressive truth which the whole history is gradually revealing. The history of Israel is the story of the

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gradual growth of a nation's knowledge of the true nature of God. This peculiar and wonderful feature of the Bible is never more clearly seen than when we bring it into contrast with the sacred books of other religions, which, as Dr. Newman Smyth says, remind us of an Indian jungle; "it is luxuriant, it abounds in tropical fruits, but it is pathless confusion."

From all this it will be seen that we can fearlessly admit that the Bible is not free from error—the men who wrote it were not infallible, the history is not always accurate, and the morality sometimes commended cannot now be approved in the light that has come to us by Jesus Christ; for Biblical science shows us a slow and intermittent process of spiritual advance, which reaches its climax in the Divine self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

As regards the New Testament, the Higher Critics are winning their way more gradually, but they have clearly affirmed the primacy of the Gospels which in public worship the Church has never forgotten; the central figure of Jesus Christ stands out with undiminished beauty and ever more commanding prominence. As the Church grows old, the Gospel remains new and stands in a vigour

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of life drawn from no earthly source—*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

The Incarnation casts its light backwards over the history of the past and forwards over the history of the future. It interprets for us the Old Testament ; it shows us that everywhere the old records were inspired by a conviction that God is righteous and that apart from righteousness there is no genuine religion.

In reading our New Testament we must remember that the true approach to the Gospels is always in the light of the Epistles.

If the New Testament were bound up in the order in which the books were written, and not in the order of their subject matter, we should realize every time we opened it that the Gospels are later in date than any of the indisputable Pauline Epistles. St. Paul is the earliest of our New Testament writers ; and the first of the Evangelists, St. Mark, as well as the next in time, St. Luke, was a companion and fellow worker with St. Paul ; and the prevailing conception of our Lord, which was in full view of every one of the Gospel writers, is the fact on which St. Paul rests everything in his teaching, the

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Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Armitage Robinson well reminds us ¹ that "it is a maxim of historical study that we must endeavour to know the writer if we are to appraise the writing; we must, if we can, place him among his contemporaries, and see what his surroundings were, what atmosphere he breathed, and under the stress of what convictions he set about his work. St. Mark, for example, was a Christian missionary who travelled with St. Paul once, and was ready to travel with him again had St. Paul been willing to take him. It may be that he did not fully share St. Paul's wide outlook on the Gentile world, and, like others of the Jerusalem believers, he had doubts as to the acceptance of Gentile converts without their submission to Jewish ordinances; but before he came to write his Gospel he had seen how God had indeed opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, and had won his way back to the heart of St. Paul. So he writes a Gospel for Gentiles as much as for Jews, and the Jesus Whom he portrays is the Christ of the larger hope; and it is only his simple adherence to the facts as he had

¹ Paper at Church Congress, 1913, by the Dean of Wells.

gathered them that keeps him true in his historic perspective and prevents him from colouring his whole portrait out of the resources of later experience. As it is, he has given us a Life which we to-day can recognize as truly human, while we know, just as he knew, that it was the Life of the Incarnate Son of God. He does not say, as St. John does say, '*He was not yet glorified*'; but the distinction is there, it is implicit, though he does not put it into words. His care is to be true to what was seen and felt by those first disciples who knew not at the time the full wonder of the Master Whom they followed. When we realize the limits which the earliest Evangelists set upon themselves, how little they intended to tell us of all that as members of the living Church they had come to know, how they concerned themselves only with Jesus of Nazareth as He was seen by His disciples in the earthly period of His ministry; we are confirmed in our confidence in their narrative, we recognize more than ever its sobriety and truthfulness."

The Higher Criticism has quite established the priority of the Gospel of St. Mark to the two other synoptic writers, St. Matthew and St. Luke; further, it is now known that

there is a common tradition running through all three. The similarities of the records of St. Matthew and St. Luke with that of St. Mark are not accidental; there is a literary connexion between them that is now seen to have been not accidental but due to the fact that we have in them the testimony of three honest witnesses to the same events.

There can be no doubt that the authors of St. Matthew and St. Luke made use of St. Mark as the base of their narratives. About two-thirds of St. Matthew and about half of St. Luke appear to have been practically translated from St. Mark. We find that these writers took St. Mark's outline of the facts of the life of Christ ready to hand, and added in the case of St. Matthew a fresh and enlarged amount of matter as regards our Lord's teaching, whilst St. Luke adds further narratives as well as teaching. Now St. Luke in the preface to his Gospel plainly tells us that there had been many attempts to write the life of Christ, and that he collected his materials from various sources. No doubt one such source was the writings of St. Mark, whilst Papias, writing about A.D. 130, tells us that the source of St. Mark's Gospel was St. Peter's preaching. Later

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Church writers repeat this statement ; and, when we study St. Mark's Gospel, we find that his story of our Lord's life follows a certain course that points to a genuine historical sequence not only of the events, but also in the order of them.

Now when we come to trace the source of the further narrative and teaching given to us by St. Matthew and St. Luke, we find it is generally agreed to have come from some lost document, which, in order to avoid any begging of the question, scholars now refer to as Q. (from the German Quelle = source). This lost document is attributed by some critics to St. Matthew, and we have the authority of Papias early in the second century that Matthew composed the "oracles," or Logia, of the Lord in the Hebrew tongue. This being so—for Hebrew, or rather Aramaic, was the popular language of Palestine in our Lord's day—we know that this document must have been translated into Greek before it was used by the three evangelists, for this is evident by the verbal similarities of the various reproductions of it by more than one evangelist. It also seems clear that St. Mark knew Q. and used it, though very sparingly. Therefore we must conclude that Q. was written earlier

than St. Mark's Gospel; in fact, as far as we know, it must have been the earliest written record of anything concerning the life and teaching of our Lord. This is just what might be expected; the teachings would be preserved in writing before any attempt was made to compose a connected history of our Lord's life. For the story of His doings would be left to oral tradition as long as any witnesses of it were alive.

We have therefore come to recognize at least three stages in the growth of the Gospel narratives: first, the actual words spoken by our Lord Himself, probably in Aramaic; then the record of these words and recollections of His words as it appeared in Q.; and finally the process of the translation and editing of Q. until it reaches the form we know in the Synoptic Gospels.

As regards the fourth Gospel and the three Epistles associated with the name of the Apostle John, the great weight of primitive testimony as to the antiquity of the Gospel and to the name of the Apostle John cannot be disputed. Theophilus of Antioch, about A.D. 182, expressly ascribes this Gospel to St. John, and Irenæus, who lived from A.D. 131 to 200, not only tells that the four

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Gospels were then accepted, but also says this one was written by that Apostle. Irenæus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was born A.D. 69, and is known to have been a disciple of St. John, so it is certain that this Gospel existed in the early years of the second century. Further, when the internal characteristics of the Gospel are considered, again the authorship remains unshaken; for it can be shown that the writing is the work of a Jew, familiar with Palestine and a contemporary of the words he records, and one who belonged to the inner circle of our Lord's disciples. Every thoughtful reader must be struck with the difference between the style of the fourth Gospel and that of the Synoptics. We find St. John's peculiar style running through the sayings of Christ, the sayings of John the Baptist, and his own comments. So identical is this style that in some cases, especially in the third chapter, we cannot say at what point the quoted speech ends and the author's comments begin, and the same style is seen also in the Epistles. So we are driven to the conclusion that St. John worked up his materials in his own mind and reproduced them in his own way, and in this manner he has given us a more true

revelation of Christ than the most accurate reporter's notes without his insight would have been.

If Jesus had been a lawgiver, and if the value of His utterances depended on verbal accuracy, there is no doubt that St. John's Gospel would not be so valuable to us as the Synoptics ; but it is not difficult to see in the imperfections of our records a providential purpose. There was the danger that the actual words of Jesus might become a new law, interpreted on the same principles as the old Mosaic law, and so a new yoke of tradition might take the place of that which He came to abolish. There is always, deep in men's minds, a longing for dogmatic authority ; but this is a weakness, and it is clear that Christ's method was not the method of the Dogmatist. Christ always tried to make men think for themselves. He taught by paradoxes and suggestions which forced men to ask what they meant and how they could be applied. Christ did not leave us a complete body of rules about life or facts about God, which men might treat as lawyers treat a code, but He gave us ideas and principles charged with Divine energy which develop and fructify in the minds of those who share His Spirit.

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It should be further remembered that in the New Testament we possess at least four documents which are older than any of the Gospels. No serious critic doubts the genuineness of St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the 1 and 2 Corinthians. These writings clearly give the Apostle's views concerning the significance of Christ's death and resurrection, as also the institution of the Lord's Supper and his ideas on the nature of the resurrection. They show us indirectly that although he was not an eyewitness of any incident of the Saviour's life on earth, yet the story of that Life which he told at Corinth, Ephesus, or Rome on his great missionary travels, agrees with that taught by other Apostles at Jerusalem, with whom he had opportunities of conference. These four Epistles were written some time between the years A.D. 50 and 59, so we find that St. Paul's teaching about the life of Christ was identical in its most important points with that generally current about twenty years after the Crucifixion, and that it strongly confirms the general trustworthiness of the Gospel narratives.

To-day we can face the world with the sure conviction that our Bible holds the spiritual

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primacy of the world's literature; it is "*the highway of the Lord.*"

Now let me briefly sum up what we have gained from this new and truer conception of God's word.

First we have gained a new appreciation of the Bible. As regards the inspiration of the books, whilst we must give up the old dogma of verbal inspiration, we hold more clearly the truth that the proof of the Bible's inspiration is the inspiration it bestows; a book must be inspired if it inspires men and women to live nearer to God. Every one is inspired in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells. The evidence to me of its authority is my need and its supply, through the comfort of the Scriptures. I have hope, and I am not alone in this experience. Coleridge writes, "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together, the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit." This sort of authority is beyond the reach of all criticism. It is true that traditional views as to date, authorship and mode of composition have been seriously modified, but there is no

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reason why these changes should lessen the appeal which the Bible makes to the conscience, the will and the emotions.

We have learnt that many of the narratives can no longer be regarded as historical or scientific records, but must rather be classed with our Lord's parables ; but this does not in any way detract from their religious value.

The Higher Critics have placed our faith on a firm basis ; for, so far as the old position rested on ecclesiastical tradition or authority, it offered no security to the intelligent inquirer, who was left defenceless against the most superficial objections of the sceptic. Modern criticism rests its case on conclusive evidence, and augments our faith both where it confirms the old position and where it corrects it.

The main conclusion therefore is that no Christian need ever be fearful of the Truth.

If Biblical criticism has destroyed a somewhat crude belief in the uniqueness of revelation, it has given us instead a vision of the comprehensiveness of all revelation. Now we know that there is only one religion, and that is the religion of Truth ; even Christ our Master never spoke of Christianity, He spoke of the Truth and said, "*Everyone that is of the Truth heareth My voice.*"

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The Higher Criticism has compelled us to see that the same truth which has been mediated to the world so specially by the Bible has also been uttering itself in the hearts of men in all ages.

The historic periods in which the various books were produced are brought nearer to us than ever before. Our age is put into sympathy with the remote past, our minds and hearts are quickened anew by ancient thought, aspiration and faith; and thus, perceiving and feeling the continuity of the mighty spiritual development running through the ages, we are enabled by a knowledge of God's methods to put our own lives more intelligently into harmony with His vast purposes.

We are writing a Bible with our lives to-day, and the old Bible with its sacred associations is helping us to see the sacredness of the new. If a man wants to find his way to God, the Bible will help him, and it will assure him that God was no more really with Israel in her pilgrimage than He is now with us. If He worked wonders for Israel, He must be working them now in our midst, and in exactly the same way, through the lives of men; and I am certain that, as soon

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as Christians have adjusted their thoughts to the new conditions, they will regard all reverent and critical methods of Bible study as a help and not a hindrance to true religion; for they will see in them the guiding of that Holy Spirit whose office it is to lead men, gradually and as they are able to bear it, into all truth.

Our faith does not depend upon a book, but upon a Person. It does not depend upon a series of texts, but upon union with and allegiance to the living Christ; therefore let us follow loyally Him Who is "*the Way, the Truth and the Life.*" Let us strive to know the truth, "*and the truth shall make you free.*"

So shall we learn to possess our souls in patience while the literary and critical problems of the Bible are being more closely studied, and we shall not be unduly distressed if we find that we have to abandon views which once we regarded as vital; for we believe in the guidance of the Spirit of Christ which is to lead us into all truth. Not in bondage to the letter, but walking humbly yet boldly in the freedom with which Christ has set us free, we shall always be ready to hear what the Spirit of the living Christ has to tell us.

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“ It must be impressed upon scholars that if Christian humility requires them to prefer truth to authority, if they should come into conflict, it also requires them to distinguish carefully in their public teaching between the results of criticism which are universally, or nearly universally accepted, and those which are only the private opinions of the few.”

DEAN BEECHING, *Truth and Humility*.

“ Such view

Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.

Man lumps his kind i' the mass; God singles thence,
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist—

So think!—for certain: think the mass—mankind—
Disparts,—disperses,—leaves thyself alone!

Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee—
Thee and no other!—stand or fall by them!

That is the part for thee.”

BROWNING.

“ Dare I trust my heart's voice against the voice of
the whole?

Yet should the roar of the Crowd ever drown the
true voice of the Soul? ”

W. SMITH.

III

A WORKING BASIS FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

NOTHING is more needed in our age than clear ideas on the principle of authority.

It has been well said,¹ "The subject is grave enough at any time, but with the bond of control so relaxed as it is to-day; with traditional creeds and sanctities so shaken; with the public mind so hungry and yet so poor, so interested and yet so distracted upon final problems; with the rising generation tutored in independence, till in an evil sense, the child is father to the man; and with the rising classes so ignorant of responsibility, affairs, history or human nature—it is a question more urgent than ever."

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, vol. iv. 1.

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What Dr. Forsyth wrote nine years ago is equally true to-day.

We are all fairly agreed that authority is one of the notes of religion. The ritual or ceremonial act, the word of the preacher, the dogmas and customs of Churches, all illustrate the claim that religion carries with it authority. In fact, we may say that authoritativeness is of the essence of Christianity, for the religion of our blessed Lord speaks as something that has a right to mastery; authority is not what it requires but what it confers.

From this it is obvious that we can never dispense with authority; but I cannot help thinking that there is need for a restatement of the principle of authority which shall avoid either confusing it with infallibility or legalizing it as despotism.

The idea of authority is out of favour, largely because it is misunderstood. Many modern writers, to the discredit of authority, oppose the religions of authority with the religion of the Spirit; it is my object to show that the early Christian standpoint was very different. The Spirit in the New Testament is not the antithesis but the source of authority, and I hope to prove that authority

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is not the tyranny of any ecclesiastical despotism but the witness of the spirit to the truth of God.

Now at the outset let me try to define what I mean by authority, for I am not one of those who believe that it is honest to follow that "safe rule" in dealing with all matters concerning religion—"never define." I believe the more you can define the better. By Authority I understand an inner power which influences both our faith and actions. It is something outside our personal opinions and inclinations, it is something which takes a place we never give, it imposes itself on us, it comes with power and compels submission and obedience as the condition of well-being, order and progress.

But besides this use of the term authority, we also speak of "authorities" as a general term for the influence of various external powers, and many difficulties have arisen both from a confusion between these two kinds of authority, and also from an illegitimate identification of the one with the other.

The two may be contrasted as inward and outward, or as absolute and relative, or, perhaps better still, as Divine and human.

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I need hardly say that authority, in the lower sense of an external regulative force, is an indispensable factor over the whole range of man's life. Without this all-pervading atmosphere of outward authority civilization would crumble to pieces in a generation; and this same authority is equally indispensable to our Christian religion, for it has many useful functions to serve.

Canon Harford well summarizes them in his article on Authority in *The Prayer Book Dictionary*, which I venture to quote.

1. *It is educative.* The achievements of the past can only be safeguarded by summarizing them in propositions and rules which can be readily taught, or by embodying them in traditional practices and observances which can be easily imitated.
2. *It economizes effort.* We cannot all investigate everything or test it experimentally for ourselves, so we take all sorts of things on trust, on the authority of others. Authority is a labour-saving device, by which we are able to use the results of many toilers'

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work. We rely on the authority of experts.

3. *It makes co-operation possible.* If people are to work together, some basis must be settled on which they are to act. All Church organizations are dependent on the formation of laws possessing recognized authority.
4. *It is a uniting influence.* We have only to think what social life would be without any accepted code of manners, bearing real if undefined authority, to pass to the inference that in worship, for example, some measure of uniformity required by Authority will be necessary if Christian fellowship is to be a reality.
5. *It is an agency for peace.* If there be no tribunal, the authority of which is generally recognized, disputes and differences, which in their earlier stages might have been settled, will harden into party badges separating hostile camps.
6. *Authority is needed for discipline.* It must needs be that offences come, but woe betide the society in which offences

against morals or good order are committed with impunity, because no executive authority has sufficient power to intervene.

From all this it will be readily seen that all external authority is essentially of a practical nature, and as such it needs no apology; but because it is external it has limitations, it can only affect the outside of the persons whom it affects; for example, we know that fear of the stake has caused many a man to recant, but it cannot alter the man's view of truth. The Elizabethan bishops enforced by their authority the wearing of the surplice, but they could not ensure general approval of it.

Now if it is important to distinguish between the two forms of external and internal authority, it is equally necessary to note that there is a close connexion between the two. That there is a relationship, is proved by the decay of the authority, where some doubt has arisen as to whether the external authority, be it sacred book or priesthood, rests on any higher inward authority; for instance, the gods of Greece and Rome are now but names, because the stories about

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them came to be recognized as immoral and untrue.

External authority must always be based on internal authority, and in the long run can only hold its ground if it can establish its claim to echo the inward voice.

The average man, if he is religious at all, generally accepts his religion on external authority. It matters but little whether this authority happens to be the parish priest, the nonconformist minister, or the open Bible; the great majority of men inherit their religion, just as they inherit their nationality and their lot in life; a man accepts his religious authority just as he inevitably imbibes his political views from the leading articles of his favourite newspaper, and frequently, alas! he never outgrows this state. But all educated and thinking men sooner or later are led to emancipate themselves from this tutelage; a stage is reached in the inner life when the man claims the right to question his authority, and this stage we should gladly welcome, for it is a symptom of spiritual growing-pains—the man claims the right of his own private judgment. This is a claim of which we need not be afraid, for it is the price we all have to pay for being

men. Any man who arrives at the point of choosing the authority to which he will submit must choose by private judgment if his act is to have any reality. It was private judgment which took Dr. Newman to Rome, and in using our private judgment we are saved from reckless individualism by the fact that in Christianity the individual never stands alone—" *we are every one members one of another.*"

When a man begins to use his own judgment, he should find that, whereas he formerly held his faith as true on authority, he now knows that authority only imposed it because it was true. And I believe that there is no Church which combines the authority of reason with the reasonableness of authority, and both with revelation, with such justice of proportion as does the Anglican Church.

The present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Davidson, has well pointed out in his charge: "*The Character and Call of the Church of England,*" that "we stand for the unfettered study of Holy Scripture . . . we stand for the liberty of private judgment in the interpretation of Holy Scripture and in matters of Faith . . . we stand for the

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principle that loyalty to truth whatsoever it be, is the first and primary duty ; and that no thought, at the outset, or in the course of the investigation, as to the consequences of honestly reaching this or that conclusion ought to divert the genuine truth seeker from his path."

To use authority for evidence ; to feel the power of beauty which belongs to ancient goodness ; to distrust ourselves when we find that we differ from the wisest and the best ; to know that the whole Truth must come, not to one or two, but to the whole of humanity, and to listen long and patiently to that " whole " as it wrestles with its yet ungrasped, unmastered truth ; to do this, and yet to call no conviction our own, till our whole mind and conscience has accepted it as true ; this is, I believe, the genuine relation of conscience to authority. From authority the appeal always lies to the experience of reality.

Now from this point of view I want to examine very briefly the external Christian authorities : the Bible, the Church and the Creeds.

I. And first as regards the Bible. If we take our thoughts back to the rise into con-

sciousness of any new revelation of truth, we arrive at some one moment in the life-experience of some man to whom the vision was given. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, St. John or St. Paul may well occur as representative names. These men or their disciples put their revelations into writing in order that they might communicate to others that truth and knowledge of God which they had received; they wanted others to share in the convictions which had transformed and given purpose and meaning to their own lives. A necessity of internal authority was laid upon them. The secret of God burned within their hearts, and they could not rest till they had told it.

Their message of course was always addressed to men of their own age, and of necessity it takes different forms to meet the different needs of different times; frequently the resources of language had to be strained in order to express what no one had expressed before. In their writings we may trace both a theological and ethical development, but clear above all we have the experiences and convictions of the writers themselves.

From this it appears that the func-

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tion of the authority of the Bible is that, having in these sacred books a record of the religious experiences of a nation specially gifted with a genius for religion, we have a record which enables successive generations of disciples to go back to the original visions of truth. Such a literature is itself a product of Authority, for the Bible is the Word of God in the form given to it by individuals who received it for communication to others.

Yet, for Christians, large parts of the Old Testament which were regarded with the profoundest veneration by the Jews of our Lord's time have lost all authority to-day, and possess only historical and illustrative value; the reason is that in between the two Testaments came He Who spake "*with authority and not as the scribes.*"

Now when we take His words and study them, two things become very clear. He makes tremendous claims upon the hearts and minds of men; when He found men willing to become His disciples, He insisted that they should place Him first in their affections. Nothing short of absolute obedience would satisfy Him. "*Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"

And the only reason He was able to make

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such imperial claims on the lives of others was because of the conception which He entertained of Himself. He placed Himself above the Bible of His own day. Note His recorded words; not "*it is written,*" or "*it hath been said,*" but "*I say unto you.*"

He set Himself above all men that ever lived. "*Before Abraham was, I am.*"

He claimed to be sinless. "*Which of you convinceth Me of sin?*"

From every point of view He placed Himself in a class by Himself. His relation with God is different from that of any other character in history, and He claims to be unique for ever. "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end.*"

While He was in the world in the flesh, there was always one final Authority to whom His disciples could continually appeal; but with the Ascension the Church passed into another stage, for there were then two sources of authoritative teaching: the one, the tradition of our Lord's own teaching and work; the other, the ever-present inspiration of His Holy Spirit working in the hearts and minds of Christian men.

In considering the traditional testimony of our Lord's teaching and work, we must

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remember that it was given first in oral form. Between the Ascension and the appearance of of the earliest gospel at least a period of thirty years intervened ; the Gospel was preached long before it was written ; the men who laid the foundations of the Christian Church took Jesus Christ at His word and believed that He was all that He said He was.

The New Testament is the record of the experience of these men concerning the life, the words and deeds of their Master, and it also contains their further experiences as the Holy Ghost wrought in them, taking of the things of Christ and giving unto them.

The external authority of the Bible, interpreted by the best scholarship of the age, stands undeniable ; but it has yet to be related to the authority of the Church and the individual. The Bible's authority must rank supreme if we did not learn from its pages that our Lord made unmistakable allusion to the indwelling Spirit of God as continuing and completing His work of guidance and revelation ; no thinking man believes that inspiration and revelation came to an abrupt ending with the last chapter of the New Testament. As Canon Alexander says,¹

¹ *Progressive Revelation.*

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“The books of Revelation are never shut. We are living not on the experiences of a dead past, but under the guidance and discipline and inspiration of a living Lord, Who is speaking to-day as truly as to the generations of old.”

II. In the later pages of the New Testament we have the beginnings of the history of the Church, and so I believe we are justified in holding the co-ordinate authority of the Church with Holy Scripture.

Now this is a position that we Churchmen may well maintain as against the supremacy of the Church over the Bible which is held by the Romanists, and the supremacy of the Bible over the Church which is held by most of the Reformed Churches.

The New Testament is the record of the experience of individuals, and these individuals made up the early Church; therefore the corporate witness of the Church, regarded as the corporate experience of individuals, constitutes a weighty authority from which it is not our wisdom to depart, for, generally speaking, the community is wiser than the individual.

But any exaggerated claims to authority by the Church as compared with the Bible

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are clearly rejected in our Prayer Book and Articles.

“God’s word written,” so far as it has settled anything, cannot be over-ridden by the Church, and in all cases truth is indispensable to the authority of Church tradition. In weighing this authority of the Church, we must remember that the early Christian preachers did not travel from land to land with the New Testament in their pockets ; they pointed to a great living organism which had been created by allegiance to their Master’s life. The growth of the early Church is one of the most wonderful phenomena in history. The presence of the Spirit of Christ in history is a fact that cannot be explained away, and as such it has great authority. The Christian Church has well been likened to a tree throwing out its branches in all directions ; every branch that has held up its leaves to Christ as the Sun of Righteousness has grown vigorous and prospered ; every branch whose leaves were only turned to Christ as a man has withered away.

Now when we see this great idea of the Divinity of Christ making its way through the storms and controversies of centuries,

and always coming out at last victorious, we may well conclude that the idea survives because it is fit to survive, that this conception is the conception which God intends humanity to hold, and that this is the historic witness of the Church. Hence we cannot look upon the Church as a human institution, but rather as the special creation of Christ for the fulfilment and fruition of His work. It is the one great society which Christ founded to proclaim and carry on His redeeming work and its distinctive character was given to it by Christ alone. The Church was founded by the Life, the Teaching, the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and by the historic outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Whom it has been continually preserved ; and here, as in the case of the Bible, the exterior authority rests on the higher internal authority to which the Church witnesses. And further, the Church has an immense range of authority over all matters not settled in the terms of Holy Scripture.

The history of the rise of authority in the Church dates almost from the beginning, but Augustine was the first to transform the authority of the Church into a factor in religion ; and its power was greatly augmented

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by the fall of the Western Empire, when the Church found itself confronted with the task of converting a pagan world. At this period the clergy were the chief representatives of every humanizing influence; they had the advantage of retaining much of the old system of order and discipline, to which Imperial Rome had owed its greatness. And in this way the clergy obtained the influence which knowledge always gains over ignorance, and the Church became a great civilizing force; but the more autocratic it became, the more the powers of its clergy were increased, the less faithfully did it carry on its Master's work. The story of its efforts, in mediæval and later times, to stifle scientific inquiry and to persecute those who were seekers after truth, is, as Dr. Bonney says,¹ "neither a pleasant nor a creditable one, but it must not be passed over, because, though the evil spirit of ecclesiastical intolerance may have been scotched, it is not yet killed, and until the representatives of the Church make a frank confession of past errors and publicly abandon the claim to decide questions which they have not studied, that spirit will continue to lurk

¹ *Science and Religion*, Dr. T. G. Bonney.

in secret places, still ready to resume, on the first favourable occasion, its attempts at tyranny."

Let it be perfectly clear that the Church is not infallible in any of its external authorities. The Church has authority over rites and ceremonies, but it has no authority to make secondary that which the New Testament makes primary, or primary that which neither Christ nor His Apostles so exalted. Our XIXth Article reminds us that great historic Churches have "erred not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." Hence, where Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome have failed, we cannot expect the Anglican Church to be wholly free from error, so it is clear that we cannot claim for any Church infallible or despotic authority. All students of ecclesiastical history know well the sophistries and reasoning in circles, in which this search after the seat of infallible ecclesiastical authority involved the Tractarians in the last century; universality, antiquity and consent—these were the watchwords, the Vincentian Canon. "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*" was to be the test; but there is no doctrine that will stand such a

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test, for it is obvious that what is accepted by all cannot be denied by any.

Our Book of Common Prayer re-asserts the weighty external authority of the Bible and of the primitive Church, of which it affirms that the Anglican Church is by unbroken continuity of life the direct heir; and by its use and encouragement of sound learning and its references to antiquity, the Prayer Book expresses a profound reverence for such external authorities as garnering the experiences of the past; whilst the actual freedom that it claims for the Church in relaxing, modifying, and adding to the system of the primitive Church, and cutting away the dead hand of mediæval theory and practice, constitutes for it a further powerful claim of authority as a living Church. In fact, the external authority of the Church, as a religious factor, is beyond dispute, for, as Harnack says¹ :—

“There has never yet existed in the world a strong religious faith, which has not appealed, at some *decisive* point or other, to an *external authority*. It is only in the colourless expositions of religious philosophers, or the polemical systems of

¹ *History of Dogma*, vol. v. p. 82.

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Protestant theologians, that a faith is constructed which derives its certitude exclusively from its own inner impulses. These undoubtedly constitute the *force* by which it exists and is preserved. But are not *conditions* necessary, under which this force becomes operative? Jesus Christ appealed to the authority of the Old Testament, ancient Christians to the evidence of prophecy, Augustine to the Church, and Luther himself to the written Word of God. Only academic speculation thinks that it can eliminate external authority; life and history show that no faith is capable of convincing men or propagating itself, which does not include obedience to an external authority, or fails to be convinced of its absolute power. The only point is to determine the rightful authority, and to discover the just relationship between external and internal authority."

Hence towards the Church, with its wider life and age-long experience, the individual must ever stand as a disciple towards his Master, as a subject towards a constitutional authority.

III. Then as regards the Creeds, in so far as they are true interpretations of Scripture we cannot suppose that the phases of

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later theology, however true, are of the essence of Christianity, unless we are prepared to say that our Lord and His disciples never taught Christianity at all. Human nature really varies but very little from age to age. We are the same in our fundamental nature as the men to whom the Christian revelation came, but also we are different. And this difference will express itself, though it be for ever true that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*"

The Creeds stand as ancient authoritative summaries of Christian belief, and the only formal profession of faith the Anglican Church requires from a layman is the short formula known as the Apostles' Creed.

Here, as in the other creeds, the fundamental question is, what do we really mean when we say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"? The first converts admitted to the Church appear to have professed their faith in these very words. The Philippian jailor asks in terror, "*What must I do to be saved?*" and receives the answer, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*"; that is, accept Jesus as Lord and Christ and thou shalt be saved. The officer of the Candace of Ethiopia, previous to his baptism, makes

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the same confession, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" Such was the earliest Christian creed, and in process of time this simple profession was expanded into those Articles which form the second section of the Apostles' Creed, in which we pass in rapid review the historical facts of our Lord's earthly career from His birth until His coming again in judgment. This section derives the whole of its authority from the New Testament, and its spiritual value depends entirely on its fidelity to the Gospel records.

We may therefore say that our Creeds preserve the normal authoritative sources of truth, just as the growing body preserves the sources of life; they are the accumulated experience of the Christian society, or rather I should say the form in which that experience is registered. And as such they have a great value, which is enhanced when we remember that they were fought over, and that men and women suffered and died for them.

History points out the circumstances in which they grew. As the centuries passed, the primitive statements of faith were found insufficient, and creeds became more and more lengthy and elaborate.

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Christian belief became a matter of keen intellectual interest. Conflicting doctrines were confidently put forward as the Church's Creed; so, to put an end to controversy, the simple primitive Creed was enlarged. It was thought that truth could not be too carefully or emphatically stated; hence Creeds tended to become more lengthy and precise.

Of the three Creeds, the "Quincunque vult," which is the latest, is also the longest; yet, long as is this Creed, it is short when set beside the doctrinal confessions of the sixteenth century, the Creed of the Council of Trent, or the Confession of Augsburg or the Thirty-nine Articles. These lengthy formulæ unfortunately only represent an age when creeds had become a matter of angry controversy rather than of devout conviction.

Our conclusion is that, as the Church made the creeds, they are human records and, I believe, honest attempts to arrive at some more true intellectual expression of the undefinable realities of Christian experience; but there is no authority for saying that they are final, and it is impossible to maintain that they have any independent authority apart from scripture.

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The Christian faith is something much greater than any of the attempts which have hitherto been made to define it. And we are supported in this belief by the fact that no creed and no confession, whether of ancient or modern times, has won universal acceptance at the hands of Christendom. The confessions of the Western Church, whether Roman or Reformed, are only accepted by the particular communities of Christians which have formulated them. They do not possess universal validity in Christendom and some of them at least lay no claim to it. The great creeds of the Western Church—the Apostles' Creed, and the so-called Athanasian Creed—are not accepted as standards by the historic Churches of the East. And, on the other hand, the Nicene Creed of the Eastern Church is not accepted in its Oriental form by the Churches of the West. In face of this fact, that no creed and no confession can lay claim to Ecumenical authority, we cannot be asked by tradition to accept such documents as infallible.

Our VIIIth Article was drawn up to safeguard the position that the Bible and not the Creed is the main authority for faith,

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and the way is expressly held open in the Articles for maintaining that the Creeds are not infallible; for Article XXI states the fallibility of General Councils, and as the creeds were certainly the acts of certain General Councils, what was legitimate in the fourth century cannot be illegitimate in the twentieth century whenever the necessity arises. For truth is always passing out of living doctrine into dead dogma; but, again with a certain conservation of moral force, it is always passing back through restatement out of dead dogma into living doctrine.

But I feel that, in all developments and restatements of Christian doctrine, at least three conditions ought to be imposed. First, no development of doctrine should run contrary to revelation and reason; secondly, no readjustment should change the Scriptural proportion of faith; and thirdly, it should not be contrary to the ascertained truth of New Testament teachings.

Within the compass of these conditions I believe that a living Church has full authority to proclaim its doctrines; but beyond this no branch of the Church of Christ has power to go, for God is not the Author of confusion. The truths which He revealed

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at the birth of Christianity He cannot contradict at any subsequent period of its life and growth. It is of the essence of truth to be in harmony with itself, for truth can never contradict truth.

In all these cases we must remember that there are degrees of authority, and forgetfulness of this has caused many of the difficulties of our own time. Not everything in either Bible, Church or Creed is of equal authority. Some things are of more importance than others, and in all these cases the function of authority is neither to compel assent nor to over-ride reason, but to testify to Spiritual experience.

True authority is always reasonable and never coercive. It places a man in a right attitude for forming a judgment, and helps him to form it ; whereas a spurious authority that speaks, as it were, with the voice of a despot to a slave, is ever to be resisted, for it kills all thought, and bars the way to spiritual and intellectual progress.

Let us therefore understand that the province of all External Authority is to guide souls into the way of peace, yet it is bound to be certain that the way of life and peace is equally the way of truth.

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The fullest acknowledgment of the claims of such authority cannot absolve us from the duty and necessity of realizing for ourselves, of criticizing, and, in some circumstances, of correcting the teaching of authority.

It is when problems grow ripe for solution that the time arrives to go behind the problem to the ultimate Divine Authority. The examination must be made by suitable persons, for there are broad issues which average minds can only properly judge when they have been sifted by trained minds with special knowledge. But there can be no security, no lasting assurance, unless we can make plain to ourselves the ground upon which our authority is accepted. Genuine authority is always rational; it claims to be always translating itself into an experience which is direct and personal. Therefore, if it is clearly understood that what a man accepts on authority he must afterwards verify in his own experience, we may say that the acceptance of the authoritative faith or order is the essential starting-point; for, as it has been well said of faith, so it may be said of authority "that it is an experiment which ends in an experience: it

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is not believing instead of knowing, but rather believing in order to know.”¹

When once it is realized that it is a vain illusion to seek for any external infallible authority, we shall understand that the final authority for our faith is the authority of experience.

It is as Dr. Illingworth says;² “we begin to put the Christian faith into practice, and as we do so we are progressively assured of its truth, and so verify for ourselves the promise of its Founder, *If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be from God, or whether I speak of Myself.* The truth of the historical reality of Jesus Christ for the believer always rests on the significance which the story of Jesus has gained from his own life experience, and this is ultimately the ground upon which we accept the authority of any truth.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the final authority for our faith. To quote Dr. Forsyth again, “The Redeemer from moral death is the seat of final authority for a moral humanity. Anything that we believe about Incarnation springs from our faith in Redemption. Our

¹ Rev. R. Brook, *Foundations*, Art. “The Bible.”

² *Reason and Revelation.*

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final moral standard is the Gospel of the Cross with its ethical restitution of all things. It was the eternal and immutable morality of holiness that was effectually established there for history and for ever."

It is for ever true that, "Christianity is not built upon a book or an institution but on the human heart. It is a revelation, not to one side of the man, not to the intellect which grasps truth, nor to the subliminal man whose defective substance needs a sacramental food, but to the whole man whose need is forgiveness, redemption and power. It claims from man faith in the sense of personal conviction, personal surrender, and personal trust."

Therefore the final authority for the Christian faith of the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the constant individual experience.

We have already noted that the New Testament is the earliest literature of Christian experience and the long history of the Church witnesses that the experience of the first century has been repeated in every age. Each century as it passes adds conviction to the vindication of our Master's claims.

Authority in this case is an obedience of

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response rather than of assent, and the final witness for God will always be found in the words of Augustine: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it find rest in Thee."

When all has been said that can be said, men's main interest in Christianity is not historical; what really concerns them is not the way in which it was originally propagated, but its present power and efficacy. This evidence is to be found in the lives of countless Christian men and women who claim that they have known the power and the love of God.

The results of the Christian faith are the strongest authority for its reasonableness. It is when men come in contact with those whose lives are guided and controlled by the hand of God, when they see the power of the faith which makes men strong, that they themselves become sure of God and of His love. "Soul is kindled only by soul," and, in the personal experience of Christians and in their consciousness of God's presence and guidance, there exists an overwhelming authority to justify the reasonableness of the belief in God and in Christ.

The authority of Christ is for the Chris-

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tian final and absolute ; and we offer it to the world as a reasonable, historic, and living authority.

He is the Authority, Who, by His Holy Spirit, leads and guides the Christian and the Church into all truth that is essential to salvation and eternal life.

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"We are all aware that by means of the acumen of later times many things both from the Gospels and the other Scriptures are now more clearly developed and more exactly understood than they once were ; whether it was that the ice was not yet broken by the ancients, and their times were unequal to the task of accurately sounding the open sea of Scripture, or that it will ever be possible in so extensive a field, let the reapers be ever so skilful, to glean somewhere after them. For there are even now a great number of obscure passages in the Gospel, which I doubt not posterity will understand much better."

Card. FISHER, Bp. of Rochester. *Assert. Luther. Confut.* 18.

"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect.
He could not, what he knows now, know at first ;
What he considers that he knows to-day,
Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown.
Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
Because he lives, which is to be a man,
Set to instruct himself by his past self ;
First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law."

R. BROWNING.

"To those Christians whose faith has been crystallized and frozen down in artificial systems of theology . . . every new truth drawn fresh from the Scriptures is an unwelcome guest, or even a suspected enemy."

Prof. BIRKS.

IV

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THE famous Rabban Gamaliel, the grandson of the more famous Hillel, is reported to have given excellent advice to his contemporaries who were troubled by the boldness of the Apostolic witnesses of revealed truth. *"If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."*

This memorable advice might well be applied to the Popes and Bishops, the Synods and Assemblies of our own age, when they blindly set themselves in array against all those movements of progressive thought where the Holy Spirit of God is clearly seen guiding men into a clearer apprehension of the Truth.

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We are told that, when the Delphic oracle decided that Socrates was the wisest man in Greece, the philosopher was much puzzled, for he was painfully conscious that he was not really wise. It was only after careful consideration that he found wherein his wisdom consisted. It was just this—that while, in common with other men, he knew very little, yet he recognized his ignorance, while they prided themselves on their knowledge. The pity to-day is, that those who have got so far as to feel their own ignorance and their own limitations should be so miserably lukewarm in their pursuit of truth. When Dr. Temple defended himself for his share in *Essays and Reviews*, he wrote to Archbishop Tait, “I, for one, joined in writing the book, in the hope of breaking through that mischievous reticence which, go where I would, I perpetually found destroying the truthfulness of religion.”

Now the power of seeking for truth is one of the grandest of human prerogatives; it is one of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of Grace Himself. The Spirit of “understanding” or “intelligence,” is God’s Spirit working in capable men, to enlarge the measure and the fullness of their capacity; from a human standpoint, we may say that it is man’s spirit

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being attracted ever nearer to the All-wise and All-knowing Father Spirit.

We have already seen that a great change of thought has taken place in regard to the Bible during the past half century. We do not pretend to think of science, history or morals just as our fathers did, and of necessity we regard revelation from our own standpoint.

We have learnt that the Bible is the record of a revelation that is progressive, the key of whose proper understanding is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Truth.

We know now that the evidence of revelation is a personal experience. We judge the Gospels by the impression and the influence they create in reproducing in men the same relationship to God as was perfectly realized by Jesus Christ.

We believe that there is a constantly growing realization of God in man, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and, generally speaking, we find that the intelligence of the Church is expanding into a wider atmosphere.

Further, we can profit by the study of Comparative Religion. Whilst I believe it cannot properly be applied to the Christian Revelation, it has yet shown us that man is everywhere religious, just as he is always rational and moral,

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although the forms in which these higher activities are expressed are often imperfect and inadequate.

Man's nature implies religion, and religion implies revelation, and the ultimate revelation is found in Jesus Christ, Who is so related to a historical development going before and following after Him, that He cannot be viewed apart from these records, nor can the records be seen apart from Him.

The Bible, the history of the Church, and the individual Christian experience all bear record to the same great Truth.

We are children of the Spirit, we live in the age of the Spirit, and we believe that the Church has a Pentecostal power which is continuous and present, and not historical and remote. It is a living God with Whom we have to do, and we believe that, "in the heart of to-day is the word of to-morrow." Theological truth is continually growing. It is impossible for a living theology to stand still if knowledge elsewhere is developing.

It has been well said, that "men may be divided into two classes, according as they face onwards or backwards." For there are two ways in which men have regarded and do still regard the Christian revelation.

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They may think of it as something complete and finished in itself, as a collection of dogmatic truths all well known and labelled, a set of doctrines promulgated once for all to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. This is a view which may be called the Mechanical position ; it is a view that is still popular, for there is a party in our Church which holds that the Church is already in possession of all the truth she needs, and for them tradition rather than progressive truth is the watchword.

But as no serious thinking man can for one moment suppose that Christ has said His last word to 'Christendom, it is the second view, which we may call the Spiritual position, that I want to put before you in this paper. I do so because I hold that we have good reasons for believing on *á priori* grounds that revelation has been progressive. The whole history of man has been the history of a gradual development in knowledge as well as in power. I need not pause to prove this by considering the general education of the human race, or the history of the Jewish people ; the only question is—Did this progress reach its final goal in Jesus Christ ? In answer, we have only to study our Gospels

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to see marks of growth. We have only to compare the simplicity of the primitive tradition preserved in St. Mark with the soaring philosophy of life with which St. John opens his Gospel. We find a development of doctrine going on within the limits of the New Testament, and this is just what we should be led to expect from our Lord's reputed words to His disciples: "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now, howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.*" Here we have our Lord's own testimony to the progressiveness of revelation, and in this connexion we may well remind ourselves of Bishop Thirlwall's words, "If that Spirit by which every man spoke of old is for ever a living and present spirit, its latter lessons may well transcend its earlier."

Now my object is to show that we are living to-day under the guidance and inspiration of the Living Lord, Who is speaking to us in this age just as truly as He spake to the generations of old.

I have no sympathy with that class of mind that would only look to the early Fathers and then judge the second century through the eyes of the Fathers, and in this light read

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the records of the New Testament ; for to read the New Testament only through the distorting atmosphere of the second century is to read into it a great deal which is alien to its Spirit, and to miss all hope of appreciating the splendid Revelation in its full purity. The old Pagan mind with which Christianity came into contact in the early days, could not possibly be the best interpreter of Christianity, and the more the mind is cleansed of the pagan, the more qualified it becomes to understand the religion of Jesus Christ ; therefore it is quite reasonable to expect that the later forms of truth should be more correct and purer.

We must also be on our guard against the tendency to transplant the beliefs and usages of the modern world into the history of the Primitive Church, for they were never dreamed of in the early days. Let us never forget that mankind and the world are still in the making.

I am convinced that our Church teaching can only be effective when it is felt that we ourselves are the trumpets of a living voice uttering itself in living messages to human souls.

We cannot and we dare not believe that those who have been before us have exhausted all the possibilities of Christ.

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It is the mission of the Church to remember the mission of the Spirit. If we live in the Spirit, says St. Paul, we must *walk* in the Spirit ; we cannot stand still in our thinking, we must go on, for the promise of Divine help is conditional upon men doing their best to deserve it. We must expect that new light will be thrown upon our Master's teaching. We must look for new adjustments of His teaching to meet the intellectual requirements of successive ages. We must watch for new gleams of truth to flash out from Him, as thought changes and as experience grows.

The reform that is needed in our Church to-day is essentially intellectual reform, for it is the thought of the age far more than the feeling or the taste of the age that is in some quarters being alienated from our holy faith.

Let it therefore be quite clear that our faith has the qualities of growth and adaptability. We feel that it fits in with the past and offers to us the key to the future. The principle deliberately adopted by our Church at the Reformation was "to keep the mean between the two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing and too much easiness in admitting variation"; and this principle of com-

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binning continuity and progress is one which underlies all sound development.

We believe that as the human mind enlarges in spiritual experience and in knowledge of the world, it is the work of God's Holy Spirit to bring fresh treasures out of the halls of Truth to enable us to grasp the special message which Christ sends to each generation; and the more clearly we understand this the more evident it becomes that our thought will not, and never can, outstrip the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ. All starts from Him and all leads up to Him.

So far from Christianity being exhausted, I believe it is only now beginning to be understood. Much of the present uneasiness and mistrust in the Christian Church is owing to the fact that God's Holy Spirit is leading the men of this age into larger and truer conceptions of Himself and His dealings with the world.

We are moving out from a faith that is traditional to a faith that is vital, and such movements are always more or less painful; for it was much easier to think of religion as a set of definite propositions rounded and complete, than it is now to think of it as a living body of truth which changes its form of expression from age to age, so as to adapt itself to the

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various generations and peoples who receive it.

We speak of "progressive revelation," but we must remember that the progressiveness is on our part, not God's; and in all vital truths it is their form and not their substance that is subject to change, for the persistence of force holds in thought as in other things.

It is one of the hardest things for the Church of any age to learn to believe in its own inspiration. We find it difficult to think that our contemporaries possess a spiritual insight and power of doctrinal statement equal, nay, rather superior, to that of the men who drew up creeds at Nicæa, or Arles, or Westminster. The temptation is ever to glorify a past time which, for those who were in it, must have seemed as dull and commonplace as does our own. Inspiration, as the late Dean Farrar reminded us, is not an isolated and exhausted spasm of the past, but an ever-living influence of the present in all pure and noble souls. We may be as much inspired as the disciples of old. We are not greater or better than the Fathers, but we are enabled to look from the sunlit heights of advancing centuries on what was said to them of old time.

The dogmas of the early Councils and

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Reformation expressed truths in words and ideas that satisfied their own generations, but we must retranslate them into our own words and ideas if they are to have any value for us. Dogmas of the fourth and sixteenth centuries involve ideas borrowed from a philosophy and science that are obsolete to-day, and to force such dogmas on us in their traditional sense, when that sense is contrary to knowledge, in this twentieth century, is suicidal to Religion, and invites a conflict with modern thought which is bound to end in disastrous defeat.

The heresy of all heresies is to forget that Christ is a living Christ. If we once give way to the thought that our God is more the God of the past than He is of the present, we open the gate to blackest despair ; for, as Dr. Martineau truly said, " Complete unbelief is attained when God is driven out of the past as we have driven Him out of the present " ; but he adds, " Complete belief is reached when God is made to fill the present as much as piety causes Him to fill the past." These are deep words, let us consider for one moment what they involve ; it is to have the courage to say that if God is not here in London or Edinburgh, He never was in Jerusalem or Capernaum of old, that if He does not speak

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to-day by His gifted prophets He had nothing to say to the prophets of old, neither to Moses nor Samuel, David nor Isaiah, nor any of the others.

I am convinced that this is emphatically the truth to be grasped in the present day ; for the most fatal thing that can befall us, as individuals or a Church, is to doubt the spiritual capacity of our own generation. What the Church did in the third century, in the fourth century, and the sixteenth century, she can do again to-day ; that re-statement of religious truth, which took place in these past ages, will, I believe, take place again. Each generation must re-state and re-interpret, in terms to meet its own needs, the revelation it has received, and in doing this it may certainly expect the guidance of the Holy Spirit, even as it was given to them of old.

Nothing short of this belief can give us courage to investigate the truth in science, or history, or revelation. No other conception of Christianity is so profoundly Christian, for it emphasizes our absolute trust in Him Who is the truth, and our abiding belief in the work of His Holy Spirit.

“How much more hearty,” says the late Bishop Lightfoot, “would be the sympathy

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of theologians with the revelations of science and the developments of history, if they habitually connected them with the operation of the same Divine Word Who is the centre of all their religious aspirations. Through the recognition of this idea, with all the consequences which flow from it as a living influence, more than in any other way, may we hope to strike the chords of that 'vaster music' which results only from the harmony of knowledge and faith, of reverence and research."

We in our age must fearlessly take the love of truth as our guide, and we shall then find that out of the principles of scientific discovery, the principles of historical criticism, and the principles generally of an enlightened intelligence, recognizing alike the facts of the physical and the spiritual world, there will spring up necessarily the Church of the future, the new and living branch of the Christian Church.

We are the custodians of this priceless gift, "*the Spirit of Truth*," Who is ever seeking to lead us into higher, clearer knowledge of eternal truth. Let us therefore make more of this revelation of our Faith ; for it is a shame upon our Christianity that our thoughts of our Master are so narrow and provincial.

I think that most thoughtful people are

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quite willing to acknowledge that we twentieth century Christians can only think the thought of the twentieth century. It is altogether a delusion to imagine that anyone can to-day hold exactly the same belief, as, say, the Christians of the fifteenth or the sixteenth century.

The ever-increasing knowledge of the world, and of ourselves, and of the Bible calls for new explanations of the facts of religion; to-day no thinking man can accept the Creeds as more than symbols, or apprehensions after realities that are too great for comprehension. As Bishop Williams of Michigan truly said :—
“ Creeds are not fences to keep our feet within the narrow limits of approved orthodoxy, they are rather flags to follow,” and in this spirit we can rejoice in the true historic Creeds of our Catholic inheritance, for in repeating them we are joining in the great Chorus of the Saints of all ages in confessing our common trust in the one God and Father of all, our love in the one Saviour of the world, and our confidence in the one ever-guiding and sanctifying Spirit.

But we cannot accept these creeds as exact statements of Spiritual Truth, for, as I hold, fixity of interpretation is not of the

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essence of the Creeds ; were this so, it would at once destroy the very value and function of a creed. For example, the creed was not disproved when we learned that the making of the heavens and earth was the work of millions of years ; or again, it is well to remember that the most conservative believer who to-day accepts the Copernican Astronomy cannot take the articles on the Descent into Hades, or the Ascension into Heaven, in the same geographical sense which the framers of these articles plainly intended. This being so, it is only reasonable that there should be liberty to interpret other Articles in a manner more in accordance with modern knowledge, and thus to express a larger and fuller faith. It is important to remember that no theology that is a living theology can ever be fixed or final, and we must trust Scholarship always to correct the errors of Scholarship. Underlying all Creeds is the one essential basis, the Personal Christ and His teaching as realized by the Holy Spirit's guidance in the experience of the Saints in all ages.

“ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid ” ; but upon that foundation men all down the ages have built and must

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always build various superstructures, theologies, creeds and dogmas, some "*of gold, silver and precious stones*"; others of "*wood, hay and stubble*"; but the fire of time will always try each superstructure of what sort it is, still the foundation abideth, for "*that word, yet once more signifieth the removing of those things which can be shaken that the things which cannot be shaken may abide.*" Scientific theories and theologies may change and vary with the larger and deeper apprehension of the ages, but Jesus Christ abideth the same for ever.

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Now, if we of this generation are ever to rise above the mists of earth, we must believe more and more that God has a blessing, and a great blessing, for us men in this age. It ought to be self-evident that each stage of development in the Kingdom of God should show its own peculiar form of life, for movement is a law of life, and only lifeless things remain unchanged.

The moment we come to think of the Church as a living organism rather than

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an institution or organization we see that this must be so.

There is a profound truth in the Apostle's words, "*The Church which is the Lord's body*"—not His record or His monument, but His body, His living members; and because it lives it must show the same phenomena that all living things show—dead and worn-out material must drop away, to be replaced by that which is new.

We have but to look historically at the facts of our own Church to see how true this is. We are not a Protestant sect invented at the Reformation. As I look back over our past history, it is clear to me that a love of liberty, a truly national spirit, and a sense of responsibility as to education have always been characteristics of the Anglican Church.

This Anglican Church of ours is a living branch of the Divine organism founded upon the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

We can prove as early and as directly apostolic an origin as the Church in Rome or any other Church.

We know that bishops, priests and deacons ministered in this British Church for centuries before a Roman prelate ever set foot in these

islands. In fact, we have all through our long history shown a steady resistance to the aggressions of the Papacy ; far back in A.D. 676, when Wilfred appealed to Rome against Archbishop Theodore, both King and Witan treated the appeal to a foreign power as an impertinence ; and later, whenever the Roman See attempted to be more than *primus inter pares*, the Pope was quickly put into his proper place. We can show that in our case, the Reformation was but a restoration to the position of independence that we had before the coming of the Roman, and that throughout the whole troubled period of Reform we never lost our historic continuity ; yet looking back we see how constantly our Church has needed many Pentecosts, many times of refreshing from the ever-living and quickening Spirit of Christ.

In Scotland we remember how, when the earliest British Church that centres round the name of Ninian fell into decay, it was re-kindled into life and activity by the work of St. Columba and his apostolic band in the sixth century ; and when in process of time the Celtic Church of Columba lost its enthusiasm, it was re-invigorated by the Anglo-Roman missionaries brought over by

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St. Margaret in the eleventh century ; and, again, two hundred years afterwards, this Church was again revived in the thirteenth century by the work of the friars and the teaching of St. Dominic and St. Francis ; and when we read of the corruption and torpor which fell upon the sixteenth century church, we understand the need of the Reformers' work again in the sixteenth century, although we regret the ruthless way in which this work was carried on by the extreme men, whose object was not reform but revolution.

Here, again, the lessons of all these revivals is that we cannot, and that we may not, stand still. In fact, nothing can stand still in this world and live. We must be quick-eared to the continuous teachings of God in history. At each stage of God-appointed change, men apprehend anew the God Who changes not, and we are warned that despised reforms always mean shattering revolutions.

New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth.
They must upwards still and upwards,
Who would keep abreast with truth.

Now what the Church has done more than once in times past in revising its forms of worship, the Church can do again ; only we must

have courage and be willing to follow without fear the path in which the Divine voice summons us to walk.

To-day we are beginning to see that Christ alone is the Truth, but we cannot claim His authority for the countless imperfections of Churches.

Christianity is not to be identified in any way with what Cyprian said or Augustine, or Thomas Aquinas, or John Calvin, or even the modern Church newspaper. Christianity is Christ, and Christ reincarnated in each generation within the living Church.

Christ said truly, "*on this rock will I build My Church,*" meaning that He would build on the confession of His Divinity just made by St. Peter. But we know to-day that this text is no excuse for the monstrous assumptions of Romanism, for common sense tells us that Christ, and not St. Peter, is the Rock.

Christ said, "*This is My Body: Do this in remembrance of Me*"—meaning this "represents" and not that this "has become" My Body; and hence His words are no excuse for the gross idolatry and grovelling materialism of many sacramental theories.

Of one thing I am very sure, and that is, that the key of the future belongs to a pro-

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gressive Church—a Church which can show itself fearless and expectant, a Church sensitive to the oracles of the Spirit.

And it is here that the past offers to us the key of the future, for it shows us all we need to know, and that is, that our God orders the march. Progress is a Divine law of life. We cannot stay the progress if we try, for the movement is Divine, and the past records show us how in the mighty march there are no steps backward ; conceptions and forms which served their purpose in the age they fitted, are replaced by higher ones when their work is done.

Wordsworth well illustrated this truth by the example of a winding river, frequently forced to turn backward in order to overcome obstacles which cannot be directly eluded, but always flowing on with additional force, conquering in secret great difficulties, and, whether we can trace it or not, always gaining strength every hour for the accomplishment of its destiny.

We frequently find that progress has “ many a backward streaming curve,” and many forward movements in Christian thought have had a backward look ; therefore, we need not be afraid of backward eddies, for the great stream marches on, half-truths complete

each other, and in this sense even reaction is a potent instrument of progress.

It is the proud boast of our Church that the Reformation was not a revolution; it did not renounce all the past, rather it adapted all that was good and true to the wants and knowledge of the age. And here let it be quite plain that the definite facts of the "*Faith once delivered to the Saints*" do not cease to be facts because their issues are capable of progressive development to meet the varying needs of man as the centuries succeed each other. At the same time, it cannot be too clearly understood that the acceptance of the facts of the Christian Creed does not postulate stagnation.

Amidst all the changes which religion has gone through, nothing of spiritual value has ever been lost. Nay, we are seeing now more clearly that nothing can rob us of that which is eternally true.

Religion, like force, may change its form, but it never dies; and our own souls, in their journey through life, if faithful to the highest, become ever more and more conscious of a Divine leading. We become more confident as the years pass on that our intellect is fed from a Higher Intellect, and that our heart

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draws its inspiration from a Greater Heart. The highest within us points to the highest without us.

If Science tells us that God is power, our hearts know that God is love.

Remember that Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and many a man may have a vision of the Eternal, and a communion with the Divine, to which the man who knows about the letter only is an entire stranger. God often flashes his secrets on receptive and expectant hearts when learned doctors and masters of sentences are sent empty away. Therefore let us strive to know ourselves as being Divinely led through an orderly universe with Infinite perfection at its centre, and let our faith be strengthened by the knowledge that the world has never been left without the guidance of the Maker of all.

Progress, effort, and enlightenment and ever more enlightenment, these are the law of man's true being. Every one of us may be taught of God. Every one of us may know the truth, and the truth will make us free. Man was made to grow and God never withholds from the meanest and humblest soul light sufficient to guide his stumbling feet.

Therefore the prayer should be often in our

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hearts, "*Send forth Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me and guide me into Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling.*"

Christ is the Light; let us open ourselves to receive the light.

Christ is the Truth; let us believe the truth.

Christ is the Guide; let us follow Him and realize that we live day by day in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

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“ Elect from every nation
Yet one o’er all the earth :—
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one Faith, one Birth !
One Holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one Holy Food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued.”

STONE.

“ It concerns us that we do not despise our birthright, and cast away our heritage of gifts and powers, which we may lose, but not recover.”

DEAN CHURCH, *Gifts of Civilization*.

“ The visible Church is the Son of God Himself, everlastingly manifesting Himself among men in a human form, perpetually renovated, and eternally young—the permanent incarnation of the same, as in Holy Writ even the faithful are called “ the body of Christ.”

MOEHLER, *Symbolism*.

“ I believe
In one Priest, and one Temple, with its floors
Of shining jasper gloom’d at morn and eve
By countless knees of earnest auditors ;
And crystal walls too lucid to perceive,—
That none may take the measure of the place,
And say, “ So far the porphyry, then, the flint :—
To this mark Mercy goes, and there ends Grace.”

E. B. BROWNING.

V

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AT no time in the world's history was there more needed a clear and true conception of what we mean when we talk about the Church than there is to-day.

In these critical days every theory must submit itself to the test of facts. Therefore I do not propose to inquire what definition of the Church satisfied either the fourth or the sixteenth century, but rather how we are to define the Church to-day.

And here at the outset there can be no overlooking the fact that there is the very largest possible variation in views concerning the Church, and a very wide difference between theologians themselves; in fact, there are as many different definitions of the Church as there are sects in Christendom. Our wisdom is therefore to turn at once to the Anglican official statements, yet here again we are

faced by a certain ambiguity which seems to have been intentional, for there can be little doubt that the purpose underlying the formularies of our Church was to make it possible at the Reformation for the strongest Catholics who could not acknowledge the Papacy, and the keenest Protestants who shrank from Geneva, to meet together in one National Church.

There are, however, certain general principles which are sufficiently clear, as being expressed or implied, in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles, which are worthy of our consideration.

We may confidently say that the Anglican Church has always claimed to be a part of the "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" as originally founded by Christ and His Apostles.

It professes to be the representative in these isles of the Church of Christ throughout all the world.

The profession of faith required of its members is, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Its children are not received into the Church of England, or the Episcopal Church in Scotland, as bodies separate and distinct from the rest of the Church, but "into the congre-

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gation of Christ's Church." Its clergy are advanced "to the office and work of a priest or bishop in the Church of God," and in our prayers we make no requests for ourselves as distinguished from the rest of the Church.

The language of our Book of Common Prayer is, "That it may please Thee to rule and govern the Holy Church Universal in the right way," and "Inspire continually the Universal Church with the Spirit of truth, unity and concord." And in the 55th Canon of 1603 all preachers are directed to move the people "to pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church—that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland."

Now this conception of the Church is precisely that which obtained in Apostolic times, and throughout the early ages of Christianity. It was understood to be a visible Society united by allegiance to an invisible Head.

I find, on turning to the Gospels, that Christ called men to be His disciples, and then taught them that as His disciples they were linked together as brethren. The unity of the flock depended on the unity of the Shepherd; in following Him they were

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drawn together and set to walk in one direction. But we have no evidence whatever that Christ taught that any special form of organization was essential; the Church was left to develop its own structure as need arose and occasion demanded.

The New Testament makes discipleship the basis of Church membership, but it also teaches that Church membership is implicit in discipleship. And this order of history is also the order of spiritual experience; for there must first be that spiritual relationship towards our Lord which makes men disciples, and then that confession of faith which labels men as members of the Christian Society, for no disciple can without danger live in isolation from his fellow believers.

If we go back to the earliest and fundamental charter of the Christian Church, "*Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them,*" we learn that Christian fellowship does not depend primarily on forms of government, but on union with Christ, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit; and yet this saying of our Lord, by promising His presence to the society of two or three believers, is a summons to form such societies.

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The Church therefore must become manifest on earth in the form of a society, and historically we find that the general result of the Apostolic age was the formation of a number of Christian communities scattered over the whole of the Roman Empire. These communities looked to Jesus Christ as their Lord and the author of their Spiritual unity ; they observed His commands as to Baptism and the Holy Communion, and all acknowledged the duty of individual obedience to His commands, and a corporate submission to one form or another of Apostolic influence.

For a real historical insight into the primitive Church, I cannot too strongly recommend the work of Professor Harnack on "*The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries.*" Professor Sanday has recently pointed out the immense value this book has had for scholars.

Professor Harnack stands out as probably the foremost historical critic of this generation, and we are on safe ground in following the main lines of his work when we speak of the beginnings of the Church. He reminds us that "the Church is younger and older than Jesus ; it existed in a certain sense long before Him ; it was founded by the prophets,

in the first place within Israel, but even at that time it pointed beyond itself. All subsequent developments are changes of form. It came into being at a moment when a society was formed within Israel, characterized by universalism, which strove to rise out of the darkness into light, from the popular and legalistic religion to a religion of the Spirit, and saw itself led to a higher stage of humanity, at which God and His Holy moral law reign supreme."

Now from this passage it will be seen that in strict accuracy our Lord did not found the Church, because it was already founded, and the word occurs in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures) about a hundred times. Yet we cannot think that when Our Lord spoke of His Church that He meant the Jewish Church; for we cannot limit the pre-Christian Church to Israel any more than we can deny the presence of Christ's Spirit in persons and societies other than Christians and the Church.

Abraham and Isaiah, Socrates and Phidias, Buddha and Confucius, must all be reckoned as each in his degree a representative and organ of the eternal Church.

Christ redeemed the Church which was

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already in existence, and, when He spoke of His Church, He was transferring the old title to the new Society which He saw would grow out of the conditions which He was creating, and there can be no doubt that St. Paul found the word already in use in three different senses : first, as a general name for those who believed in Christ ; secondly, for the individual community—“ *those of the Church* ” ; and, thirdly, as meaning the assembling together of the community.

Hence we see that, “ the primitive Christian community took over the most solemn expression which Judaism used for the whole body of people in relation to the worship of God.”

They were a community called of God and ruled by the ever present Holy Spirit. They had sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—the one, Baptism as the rite of initiation ; the other, Holy Communion, as the means of preserving spiritual life among the members. In both cases there was a visible token of membership in a visible Society.

Nowhere do we find isolated believers, but everywhere the baptized believer is by Baptism a member of a visible Society.

This Society exists first at Jerusalem, gradu-

ally it becomes conscious of its universal mission and admits Gentiles on equal terms : as the Gospel spreads to Samaria, Antioch, Galatia, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, the centre of gravity shifts from Jerusalem, and in every city a local Society or Church springs up. The word *Ecclesia* is used of these local Churches and even of household Churches which existed in the earliest days alongside of and within the local Churches, and the plural "Churches" is used quite naturally in the New Testament for these individual societies (twice in the Acts, twenty-one times by St. Paul, thirteen times in the Apocalypse) ; but there is no hint of rival Churches in the same area.

In St. Paul's Epistles we find a real discipline in these local Churches, and a real bond of union linking the different Churches together, although there was as yet no developed system of government. Every Church was independent of the rest and free to serve Christ in its own way, if only it did serve Christ. We further learn that there was inter-communion between different Churches, and the Apostolic authority was the bond of union between them.

It is clear therefore that the principle of

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a visible Church stands in harmony with the visible incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. So we find that, according to St. Paul's teaching, the Church is to be an incarnation of God in society, just as Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God in man; and this union of man with God, this incarnation of God in humanity, is represented in the Epistle to the Ephesians by the figure of a colossal man with many members, but one life and one spirit. A particular Church may be a Church in a house, or a Church in a city, or a Church in a province; but "the Church" is "*the Body of Christ*," comprising all these particular members. For the body is not one member, but many; and Christ is the Head of all alike, for all are compacted together in Him, and from Him they receive their life and power, and form the glorious aggregate of His Holy Catholic Church visible here on earth, which is called "*the Body of Christ*"; that is, the instrument of His will, and the organ of His Spirit on earth; and "*the Bride of Christ*," that is, the object of His boundless love. "Wherever Jesus Christ is," says Ignatius in his Epistle to the Smyrnæans, "is the Catholic Church."

And here it is well to remember that the

idea of one Holy Catholic Church was only slowly developed in the early consciousness of Christendom.

In the East the article of the Church does not occur in the creed of Ignatius A.D. 107, or in that of Origen in the middle of the third century, or in the Creed of Lucian of Antioch at the beginning of the fourth century. It first appears in the private Creed of Arius, A.D. 328. The Nicene Creed has no article of the Church, but in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan form it appears in its fullness, "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." But this expression point was only reached towards the close of four hundred years of Christian thought.

It is now generally admitted that the reason of this late development of the idea of the Catholic Church must be traced to the belief in the "Parousia," the literal and immediate coming of Our Lord. It was believed that, before the then existing generation of Christians had passed away, the Lord Jesus would return, and the results of this belief can hardly be imagined to-day; mortal life to the Early Christians seemed so uncertain, that they acted and planned only for the day. They saw no need to make provision for the

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Church of the future, its ministry, its worship or its theology, when they expected at any moment to greet their returning Lord.

We have already noted that it was the common life in Christ which gathered individuals into societies or Churches, and this pointed forward to a Spiritual unity of a Universal Church, though we must confess that it was not purely spiritual motives which gathered the early Churches into a great worldly corporation, modelled on the lines of the Imperial Roman Administration. Dr. Gwatkin¹ reminds us that these Churches "were gradually drawn together by the logic of events, till their original independence became a thing of the past."

And here it is well to understand in view of much that we hear concerning Christian unity, that there never was an epoch since the Church spread beyond Jerusalem, when the "*one body of Christ*" was one in visible uniformity or even one in perfect sympathy. At no period was there ever one outward and visible society gathered together in one formulary, for it is common experience that different minds will ever see different parts of truth.

¹ *Early Church History*, Dr. H. M. Gwatkin.

Dr. Gwatkin well says, "The revelation of the Christ is not a law of outward conduct which can be laid down once for all, but a historical fact of inexhaustible significance. For the very reason that its essence is universal, its conception and expression by men must be partial, according to diversities of race and character. Hence the vast variety of Christianity."

And in this connexion the late Bishop Westcott also pointed out that "it is possible to trace even in the Apostolic age the essential features of most of these divisions over which we grieve."

The One Holy Catholic Church, in which we confess our belief, is therefore more than a visible assemblage of Churches. It is a unity which is Spiritual and ideal, and therefore real. It is One, because Charity is already unity. It is Holy, not that it is free from sinners, but because it lives in Christ. It is Catholic, not simply because the Churches are scattered to the ends of the earth, but because its life is of a higher order than space and time. It bears witness in earth and heaven that *"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have ever-*

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lasting life." It confirms the promise, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*

It is our wisdom therefore to understand, that the One Holy Catholic Church exists as a spiritual ideal which we must ever keep before us ; it is an inward reality which we must strive after, and by which we must test and correct all our theories, and all our schemes of reform.

Our conclusion therefore is that the Church of Christ is both Divine and Human, Invisible and Visible. The organizations are visible and external, but the life is inward.

There is a visible Catholic Church, in much the same sense as there is a visible collective humanity. But as in humanity there are many kindreds, races and tongues, so I believe in the Catholic Church there are many communities. Every congregation of faithful Christians is a Church of Christ ; and the sum total of these congregations is Christ's Holy Catholic Church.

This is, I believe, the position that has been held by our Anglican Church since the Reformation.

If we turn to the XIXth Article of Religion : " Of the Church," we read, "*The*

visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men " (faithful men is not defined), "*in which the pure word of God is preached*" (note that neither the word "pure" nor "word" is defined), "*and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same*" (no hint is given as to what constitutes "necessity," and we are not told what makes it "requisite").

From this it is clear that our Church holds that there is a visible Holy Catholic Church, and that there are Churches such as these of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch, in old times, and Rome, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany, in the later centuries, which are also equally members of the Catholic Church.

It is also equally clear that the visibility of the Catholic Church cannot consist in uniformity of organisation ; if this were so, the Catholic Church would be limited to the confines of these Churches that have uniformity of organization or else would be non-existent. The points on which the Churches of to-day differ are generally all concerned with organization and discipline, and it is only charitable to believe that each Church honestly strives

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to embody the Christian ideal as it conceives it, just as we believe that every individual must aim at doing so in his own life.¹

We Anglican Churchmen claim to be rightful members of the Church of Christ, and, whilst we make Episcopacy our own rule and believe that it has all the sanctions of antiquity and historic value, we do not pass judgment on the government of non-Episcopal Churches, nor do we declare that Episcopacy is the sole system permissible in the Church of Christ. For our common experience is that God Himself does not limit His blessings within the bounds of Episcopacy,

¹ Prof. C. A. Briggs, in *The Fundamental Christian Faith* (p. 191), says: "So far as historical continuity of institution is concerned, the Protestant bodies recognize it as well as the Roman Catholic: the only difference between them is as to the organs of transmission. The Roman Catholics, while they recognize the Episcopate and other orders of the ministry, so emphasize the succession of the popes from St. Peter that all succession seems to be merged in this. The Anglicans in the same way exaggerate the apostolic succession through the Episcopate. The Presbyterians and Lutherans emphasize the succession through the presbyterate. The Congregationalists find the true succession in the Christian people. Really it is in all of these organs in due proportion and harmonious co-operation. All of these bodies are correct in a measure, but no one of them grasps the whole truth of the institution of Christ and His Apostles."

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but pours richly and without stint His Holy Spirit's inspiration and blessing upon all.

Our Article makes it clear that the practical work of the Church is teaching and preaching the Gospel, and, subsidiary to this, the Administration of the two Christ-ordained sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Now while we have every cause to be proud of our title as a true branch of the Great Universal Church, we are, or we should be, equally proud of the fact that we are a Reformed and Protestant Church, titles for which our forefathers dared to suffer and to die. The late Bishop Stubbs of Oxford, in his fourth visitation charge, well said that, "there ought to be no hesitation in admitting that the Church of England since the Reformation has a right to call herself, and cannot reasonably object to be called, Protestant."

It is the fashion in some quarters to disparage the Reformation, and this disparagement is, I believe, largely due to the indiscretions of its friends ; but it is well to be reminded that the Reformation had its roots in the past, and was largely conditioned by what went before it. It was, in truth, the mightiest uprising of the human spirit against wrong

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and falsehood which the world has yet seen ; it was an emancipation of conscience rather than of mind ; it was a revolt of the plain Christian man against a burden which had become intolerable, and which the Church refused to remove. It has been truly said that ¹ “ Antioch and Spires must ever be sacred places for those who care for the highest welfare of the race. From each we get a name which marks a vital distinction, each bears witness to a new truth and a new hope for mankind. From Antioch we get the name Christian ; from Spires we get the name Protestant.”

Now this term Protestant is a name that we Anglicans share with the Greek Church, though it does not know the term, for it takes up exactly the same line of protest against the Roman claims as was taken up by the Diet of Spires in 1529.

As a Church we are pledged to-day rather to the principles than to the doctrines of the Reformation, and to these principles everything is possible. Colani said years ago at Strasburg, “ Protestantism is not the last note of a Reformed Church ; it is the first

¹ I believe by Dean Wace of Canterbury.

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note, it shows the direction in which the Church intends to travel."

On its negative side the Reformation was a movement of revolt against the authority of the Roman Church, caused by the identification of that authority with such grave and serious abuses as the tyranny and exactions of the clergy, the crushing of the Gospel under a load of legend and observance, the false conscience induced by such fictions as enforced celibacy and auricular confession.

When men looked back over the history of the Church in its earlier ages, they found that the claims made by Rome had very slight justification, and that the authority of the Roman Bishop was only the outgrowth of conditions which were once real and important, but which had long since passed away; so the repudiation of the Supremacy of Rome and the rejection of the absolute authority of the Mediæval Church, were necessary conditions for reform.

But the positive side of this great movement is as important as the negative. The revolt against the system of the Mediæval Church was a revolt not only against abuses in detail, but against a false conception of the religious life, against a concep-

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tion which regarded religion as law; and it greatly influenced our modern conceptions of the Church. It asserted the indwelling of God in the world and in human life; it proclaimed that reason and conscience are the Divine light in every man, and that they are the faculties by which normal relations are established with God, and by which God uplifts man to higher, fuller and more abundant life.

Hence it asserted that the universal Church has and can have no absolute or infallible authority in religious matters.

Now our Church expresses this truth very clearly in the XXIst Article, concerning General Councils, where it states that, "when they be gathered together (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture."

This position, that the supreme expression of religious truth is to be found in a literature, and not in a dogma, is, I believe,

undoubtedly the true position, and it is in virtue of this that we claim the right to re-examine and test the truth and value of doctrines and customs which have grown up around the Christian faith.

Such questions cannot be taken as closed by invoking the authority of the Church. It is true we say that, "the Church is the interpreter of Scripture," but not the Church of any one age, or the Church speaking in a General Council; and certainly not the Pope as the infallible Vicar of Christ. The voice of the Church has well been likened to the British Constitution, it is not a written document, it cannot be reduced to any formulæ, it must be gathered painfully and with difficulty from the thought and experience of successive generations of men.

The ultimate authority in the Anglican Church is the collective religious consciousness; and any endeavour to precipitate once and for all the thought and belief of the Church into an unchangeable formula, which shall be for all time the expression of the Catholic faith, is nothing less than unbelief in the power of the ever present Eternal Spirit.

The Authority claimed for the Church is therefore a constitutional authority. Infalli-

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bility is neither claimed nor assumed, but the Church is to be conceived of as a living thing—" *the Body of Christ*," His living members; and it is here, as in everything else, that we must look for the survival of the fittest and adaptation to environment. Our English Reformers fearlessly appealed to the past for guidance; but only for guidance and not for slavish imitation, and so, as Bishop Creighton said, the distinguishing characteristic of our Church has always been its appeal to sound learning.

The Anglican Church owes its distinctive features to the fact that the English Reformation was brought about by statesmen and not by theologians. We have already noted that it was the abuses of the Mediæval Church, the extortions of the Papacy, and the corruption of the clergy, rather than its speculative errors, that alienated the nation; and it was because the Englishman's mind acted on political and ethical, rather than on sectarian lines, that the country took its stand for the Reformation movement with whose fortunes its greatness and prosperity have been so closely connected.

We have already noted that the Reformation dealt radically with the abuses of the

Mediæval Church and set religion free to advance upon the lines of human life. In our own country, these lines were those of the national temperament and character, largely conditioned by political events. For example, the Englishman's attitude towards Romanism was determined by the Marian persecutions; his attitude towards High Churchism by the tyranny of the Stuarts, and his attitude towards the more advanced forms of Protestantism by the bigotry of the Commonwealth; and in each case there was substantial justice for this attitude, for the Englishman has no desire to be dictated to by Pope or Bishop or Presbyter.

This characteristic may well be termed the quality of sanity, the moderate position which springs from a real effort to understand the truth in rival views, and the justice of opposing claims. It is the same spirit of balance and moderation which has produced the British Constitution, which in spite of its defects has become the pattern for the Government of all civilized countries.

But it is well to remember that the retention of the Episcopate and the Prayer Book was largely due to the State acting on political rather than on religious motives.

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Nothing took place at the English Reformation to break any Episcopal succession which then existed, nor was it thought advisable to alienate the conservatism of the country by unnecessary changes in public worship.

The temper which is known as Erastianism is, I believe, inbred in all national Churches. The most distinctive doctrine of the Church of England is the Royal Supremacy ; the King is "in all causes and over all persons, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, within these his dominions supreme." And this temper needs no apology from any one to-day, for, as Professor S. R. Gardiner says in his *History of England* : "If we regard the Sovereign as the representative of the State, the declaration that he is supreme over all persons and causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, may be justly spoken of as one of the corner-stones of the liberties of England. It meant that there should be no escape from submission to the law of the land, and that justice alone and not privilege was to rule the relation which existed between clergy and the people." From this it will be seen that all persons, both Churchmen and Nonconformists, are equally subject to the law, which interprets and enforces the contract under which a Dissenting Minis-

ter discharges his duties no less than it does the Acts of Parliament which regulate the status of the Clergy of the Church. And in taking up this position the State has evidently truly felt that the conscience of the nation as a whole is more to be trusted than that of any particular section of the community.

The Crown, whether acting under the advice of its ministers, or through the law courts or through Parliament, is a truer exponent of the mind of the nation than any Ecclesiastical Synod; for a synod, whether clerical or mixed, will speak rather for a denominational than a national religion. The liberty of the Church in the phrase of many Churchmen to-day means only too frequently the domination of a party and the crushing of opponents; but the Anglican Church rests on a broader basis than this, for it stands for the best judgment and conscience of the nation.

Let us therefore, with Hooker, understand that all Church organization exists for one supreme end—to establish the reign of Christ in the hearts of men. No human soul that loves Him can be really outside the Church.

It exists to do the work of Christ on earth, to build up the Christian character, and to advance the kingdom of God; and as a Church

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we are to be judged by the success with which we accomplish this purpose. Surely under the complex conditions of modern life, every form of Church organization may find its work and be welcomed.

For the unity which Christ seeks is no unity of outward form, but unity of Spirit. The New Testament knows nothing of any unity except that which is purely spiritual. Our Lord prays that His disciples may be one, but He does not ask that they may be one in government or ritual. His prayer is that "*they may be one in us*"—that is, in spiritual life, in love.

The ideal of ecclesiastical unity, borrowed from the idea of imperial Rome, has been tried, and it failed. To-day it would be the greatest curse and hindrance to the moral and intellectual progress of mankind.

Far be it from us Englishmen to see in our Church the only one universal type; let us recognize the Apostolic dictum that there are "*diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administration, but the same Lord; diversities of operation, but the same God.*"

Just as in Nature, under the influence of forces identically the same, there is a constantly progressive evolution of higher forms of life, so in religion under the influence of

the one Spirit there is a continual development of more accurate opinions and more excellent practices. Our ancestors tried like free men to make advances upon their ancestors. Alas for the heritage they have bequeathed us, if we have been transformed thereby into grovelling slaves who are fearful of speaking the truth that has been revealed to us !

The great aim of all religious reformers in the past was to bring the belief of their age into harmony with its faith, to get a correspondence between religious doctrine and religious life ; they had to give new readings to truth to bring it into accord with the advanced religious sentiment of their age. What has been done in the past can be done again. And when the time arrives, as assuredly it will come, sooner or later, when our National Church will have to revise her formularies and re-state her doctrines, let us see that we are not numbered amongst those who in every age have insolently trampled on all that is new, and who have tried to silence what they could not understand.

I trust that the great majority of Churchmen will regard all proposals to limit the comprehensiveness of our Church with the great-

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est suspicion ; yet when I consider the ignorance and bigotry of past ages towards those who have come from God, blessing and to bless, my heart fails me, for I perceive that there are some men in this age, who, in the supposed interest of its catholicity, are doing their best to destroy the Church's national character and make it alien to the religious experience and aspirations of its members. They are trying to stamp out the new forms of faith and of knowledge, and to silence the men who are rising up to show the wonderful ways of God.

Although, as has been well said, there is at once the shadow of Calvary whenever any great soul utters new truth ; yet God is not mocked ; torpor and stupidity bring their own punishment ; those who will not reform sicken and die, and their place knows them no more.

“ They that wait on the Lord,” patiently abiding His time and His method, *“ they shall renew their strength.”* Theologies may be barren and Churches retrogressive, but Christ lives ; man falls, but God rules, and He is not confined in orthodox formulæ, nor is He only attainable through human priests and material symbols.

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The truer scientific habit of mind, which is developing almost unconsciously in each one of us to-day, is fatal to all superstition and credulity. An age whose watchword is Evolution is not inclined to find in any epoch of the past the last word in either Church organization or theology; it is loyal neither to authority nor to opinions, however venerable they may be; but to truth and to facts it has sworn allegiance. Christ is the Truth. If our Church be but true to Him, it has nothing to fear either in the present or in the future, except its own narrowness, its own superstitions, and idolatries; for in the long run the interests of truth and religion must be identical.

The late Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, once said: "That religious communion will most commend itself to Englishmen which displays the greatest efficiency in winning souls to Christ; which proves, by a long, firm grasp of its spiritual conquests, the stability and force of its methods, which makes men *men* and not merely bigots or spiritual invalids . . . which has power and elasticity enough to adapt itself to all sorts and conditions of men." And to-day the Captain of our Salvation summons His Church militant

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not to a forlorn hope, but to certain and glorious victory. The call is to follow in the footsteps of a living, ever-present Christ, Who needs men to live for Him—a far higher heroism, a more costly martyrdom than they of old were called to endure.

The message which we must bear is of the simplest kind. Let us boldly declare that our Church is one of growth and progress, not of stereotyped immobility; for the Church is not yet a finished building, but “a living temple” being built up of living members. Let us fearlessly proclaim the message of Christian righteousness to all, and act upon the belief that the service of the nation is the service of God.

Let us bid the rich man remember that wealth has not been entrusted to him merely that he should squander it. Let us remind the poor man that in giving bad work for good pay, in defrauding his employer, or tyrannizing over his fellows, he is showing himself no better than the stock subjects of his denunciation.

Let us strive to make our Church so wide and simple in its general affirmations—so fearless and honest in its pulpit utterances—that beside its noble breadth and sympathy,

the narrowness and bigotry of sects shall wither away, and no intelligent follower of Christ need remain outside its fold.

Let us make the most of our opportunities of co-operation with fellow Christians outside our own fold, so that we may learn to live in mutual charity and toleration with all men. For as we believe that every fold of the Church stands for at least some one aspect of the truth, so the great Church of the future must include in all its fullness every one of these aspects.

Let us sink the differences of High Church, Low Church, and Broad Church in the recognition of the Comprehensive Church¹ which can claim for its free use whatever is good and true and beautiful whenever found.

Already all Christian students share in a

¹ Cp. Archbishop Davidson, Address to Canterbury Diocesan Conference, reported in *The Guardian* July 2, 1914:—

“Our Church of England stands for liberty and comprehension, and many of us (of whom I am one) prize, more than we can readily express in words, that characteristic of our history, our formularies, our present-day experience. But it is an “ordered liberty.” It is a comprehension which has its bounds. The search of any honest man for truth must be an unfettered search; but the accrediting of a Minister of Word and Sacrament by due authority, like the retention and use of those creden-

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larger heritage than that which belongs to the Church of their birth, and what we all need to realize to-day is that the great Catholic Church cannot enter into the full possession of the spiritual heritage which is for us in Christ until it attains to an organic life which is large enough to include all the great elements of Christian vitality which are active and effective for the salvation of men in our complex modern world.

Therefore let us sink, as far as possible, all petty partisan hatreds, and stand shoulder to shoulder in the army of Christ against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

If this is done, victory is sure, for on God's earth truth must at last prevail. Still, as of old, she must work and pray, going on from strength to strength: "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

tials, means something definite. It implies and necessitates personal loyalty to the organic life, credal and administrative, of the Society whose sanction the teacher and ministrant claims—the Society within which, note it, within which—the credentials are held and used.

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"It was the distinguishing feature of Christianity that a peculiar class or profession, consisting of members who entered it of their free choice, consecrated by the laying on of hands, removed from all worldly cares and occupations, devoted themselves to spiritual and godly things."

RANKE, *History of the Popes*.

"Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

ST. PAUL, I *Corinthians iv. 1*.

"Speak thou the Truth. Let others fence
And trim their words for pay;
In pleasant sunshine of pretence
Let others bask their day.

"Guard thou the Fact; though clouds of night
Down on thy watch-tower stoop;
Though thou should see thine heart's delight
Borne from thee by their swoop.

"Face thou the wind; though safer seem
In shelter to abide;
We were not made to sit and dream;
The safe must first be tried."

DEAN ALFORD.

"I believe unreservedly that it is the duty of every man to pursue unflinchingly the search for truth, and to free himself so far as he can from narrowing and fettering preconceptions as to the conclusions to which his search will lead him. . . . We stand for the principle that loyalty to truth, whatsoever it be, is the first and primary duty, and that no thought, at the outset or in the course of the investigation, as to the consequences of honestly reaching this or that conclusion ought to divert the genuine truth-seeker from this path. . . ."

ARCHBISHOP DAVIDSON, *The Character and Call of the Church of England*.

VI

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IN the last chapter we have seen that the constitution and authority of the Church resides essentially in "the congregation of faithful men," and, in opposition to all Romish claims, it is not dependent on the existence of the priest-man, for the Christian priesthood is co-extensive with the human race. As individuals, all Christians are priests alike; as members of a corporation they have their several and distinct offices, and hence the necessity for practical organization.

In the early days it quickly became necessary to appoint special officers for communicating instruction, for conducting worship and for dispensing social charities. But Dr. Lightfoot reminds us that "the priestly functions and privileges of the Christian people are never regarded as transferred

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or even delegated to these officers; they are called stewards or messengers of God, servants or ministers of the Church, and the like: but the sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon them.”¹

Now whilst our Church jealously maintains the independence of particular Churches in respect of Polity, it clearly asserts its own belief in the threefold orders of the Ministry.

The preface to the Ordinal states, “It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders in Christ’s Church; Bishops, Priests and Deacons,” and in the Ember collects and prayers in the Ordinal these orders are spoken of as having been appointed by God’s Divine Providence” and by “His Holy Spirit,” and in this connexion Dr. Sanday remarks that² “the Christian ministry, like most other administrative forms, rather grew than was made. And that by a process which if we could have seen it we should have described as quite simple and natural—though because natural

¹ *The Christian Ministry.*

² *Conceptions of Priesthood*, pp. 58–59.

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it is not to be supposed that it is any less providential."

Immediately after the Apostolic times, Church history passes through what the late Dr. Salmon called a dark tunnel. There is light on the history so far as we have the New Testament to guide us, and there is light again when we come to the Christian writings which began to be plentiful towards the end of the second century; but there is a dark period, and it was during this time that the organization was matured. History tells very decisively that, before the middle of the second century, each organized Christian community had its three orders of ministers, bishops, priests and deacons.

In the earliest days, the Apostles were the sole directors and administrators of the Church; but with the rapid growth of the Christian body the work became too vast for them, and so, to relieve them from this burden, the less important functions were delegated to others, and in this way each grade of the ministry, beginning from the lowest to the highest, was created.

It will be well to examine briefly each order from this standpoint.

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The establishment of the diaconate came first.

I. DEACONS.

In the early history of the Church in Jerusalem, given to us in the Acts of the Apostles, we have certain incidental notices of the gradual development of organization, to meet the growing necessities of a corporate life.

The seven officers who were appointed to supply the daily needs of the poor were not deacons in our modern sense; in fact, the word "deacon" does not occur in the passage in Acts vi. 1-8, which records the appointment of these men. It is quite possible that they would be called "servants," and so most probably the word "deacon" remained for some time a mere description of function, rather than a title for the lower order of clergy as it afterwards became.

There can be no doubt that later Church tradition regarded these seven as the earliest deacons, and so strong was this feeling that the number of deacons in some Churches was limited to seven. Dr. Lightfoot has told us that the Roman Church in the middle of the third century restricted the number

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of deacons to seven and "a canon of the Council of Neocæsarea (A.D. 315) enacted that there should be no more than seven deacons in any city, however great, alleging the apostolic model. This rule, it is true, was only partially observed; but the tradition was at all events so far respected, that the creation of an order of sub-deacons was found necessary in order to remedy the inconvenience arising from the limitation."

The definite title is met with first in the Greek churches, and here the order from the first is found to include the services of women and men alike. The strict seclusion of the female sex in Greek and Oriental countries necessarily debarred them from the ministrations of men; and to meet the want thus felt deaconesses were appointed. St. Paul mentions "*Phebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the Church that is at Cenchreæ*" in Romans xvi. 1.

The first explicit mention of deacons is at Philippi about A.D. 63 (Phil. i. 1) and again at Ephesus (1 Tim. iii. 8) a few years later.

It is very questionable if at first this diaconate was a definite office. Dr. Hort¹

¹ Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*.

considered that it was a function of ministration corresponding to the "bishops," who had a function of oversight; so that bishops and deacons were not two definite orders of officials, but simply such as oversee and such as serve, whatever offices they may hold.

As the personal ministry of St. Paul drew to a close, and it became clear to his mind that the return of Christ was not yet, it was natural that ecclesiastical organization should assume a new and increasing importance; so we find him recognizing expressly the bishops and deacons at Philippi.

Those who ruled, and those who served under them were coming to form definite classes to which the natural names "overseers" (*ἐπίσκοποι*) and servants (*διάκονοι*) were beginning to be formally appropriated.

St. Paul, writing to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 1-13), gives certain rules which should govern the choice of deacons, and he lays stress on those qualifications which would be most important in persons moving about from house to house, and entrusted with the distribution of alms. They are to be free from certain vicious habits, such as love

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of gossiping, and a greed of money, into which they might easily fall from the nature of their duties. Trustworthiness is demanded of the women and strict honesty of the men. They are to know what they believe and to live in accordance with it, but no qualification for teaching is required of them.

There can be little doubt that the earliest duty of the diaconate was to distribute to the poor and needy the offerings of the Christian Church, for we must remember that the Christian communities grew up in the midst of poverty; in times of persecution the confessors in prison had to be fed, those whose property had been confiscated had to be supported, and there were the widows and orphans; further, hospitality was enjoined as the common virtue of all Christians, and travelling brethren, equally with the poor of their own community, were entitled to a share in the distribution of the Church funds.

In primitive times every case of poverty or suffering was known to the presbyter-bishop, and personally relieved by the deacon; hence the deacon was the presbyter-bishop's "eye" and "heart," and this original conception of the deacon's office is

preserved to-day in the office of Archdeacon.

In the Anglican Church the duties of a deacon are to assist the priest in Divine service, especially at the Holy Communion, to read the Scriptures in Church, to instruct in the Catechism, to visit the sick and poor with a view to their relief, and, if licensed, to preach, and in the absence of the priest to baptize. The office is generally regarded as a probationary one before admission to priest's orders; but in primitive times it was not uncommon for a man to remain a deacon for life. It is unnecessary to say that a man taking Holy Orders is required to relinquish all other worldly professions or callings, but many think that to-day it would be advantageous if this rule could be modified in the case of deacons, and that it might be allowable to admit permanently to this subordinate office men who could maintain themselves as St. Paul himself did by some secular employment.

II. PRESBYTERS OR PRIESTS.

Whilst the diaconate was an entirely new creation due to special emergency, and developed by the progress of events, the early history of the presbyterate, as Dr.

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Lightfoot reminds us, was different. We have no account in the New Testament of the institution of this order in the Christian Church, and the reason probably is that it had been settled some time before the earliest books of the New Testament were written. Further, there was not the novelty about the office that there was in the case of the diaconate ; for the office was well known in the organization of the Jewish synagogues, who were ruled by a body of elders or presbyters. Jewish presbyteries existed in Apostolic times in all the principal cities of the Dispersion ; and, whenever a Christian Church was founded, elders were appointed who occupied a similar position to the elders of the synagogues. We read of St. Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey appointing elders in every church.

In course of time the Christian elder, the “presbyter” of the New Testament, came to be called in Greek, *ἐπρεβς*, and in Latin, *sacerdos*, words rendered “priest” in English. He is designated “priest” in our Prayer Book ; but this word is by its etymology a contraction or corruption of the word presbyter and reminds us that

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the office denoted by the name of *priest* in the Christian Church is to be identified not with that of the Jewish priest, but with the “*elder*” or presbyter of the New Testament.

Now the duties of the presbyters were twofold. They were the rulers and the instructors of the congregation, the teachers and pastors of the flock of Christ.

There is, however, a sense in which they were also delegated to exercise a ministerial priesthood, for it is clearly an original teaching of Christianity that all the Lord's people are priests. “*Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood.*” (1 Pet. ii, 5-9). “*He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father*” (Rev. i. 6).

Such is the Apostolic language, and we believe that, as all Christians are priests, by virtue of their membership of Christ, there is no sacrificial tribe or class between them and God. Each individual member of the Christian body holds immediate access to God and can at all times hold personal communion with the Divine Head; hence, as the

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late Canon Liddon maintained, " the difference between clergy and laity is not a difference in kind but in function."¹ As priests unto God they are members of one body, and this body has different organs through which the functions of life find expression. The acts performed by it and the words spoken in its worship, are corporate acts and words, and the hands and voice required for the due exercise of these functions are supplied by an ordained ministry.

The Christian ministry is thus the necessary instrument of the Church's corporate service.

If the members of the second order of the ministry are termed priests (and here it must be remembered that bishops also are priests) it is because they are specially set apart to perform priestly functions pertaining to the congregation as a whole. What they do is done in the name of others, and with their concurrence. " We bless the cup of blessing," " We break the bread," says St. Paul, speaking for the community; " we offer," " we present," is the language of our Liturgy. The priesthood then of the two higher orders of the clergy in the Christian Church is a ministerial office; it

¹ Liddon, *University Sermons*.

is exercised on behalf of others and not instead of others.

But, as Mr. Paige Cox says,¹ "This fact of the representative character of the Christian ministry does not detract by one iota from the authority attaching to it by virtue of Christ's commission for the exclusive performance under normal conditions of the corporate priestly acts of the Congregation."

These two facts therefore must be recognized, (1) that the Christian priesthood is a representative ministry, and (2) that it has exclusive authority to be "a faithful Dispenser of the word of God and of His Holy Sacraments"; for "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same" (Art. XXIII).

Now as regards the first fact, the choice of fit men for the Ministry belongs to the whole body of the Church, and the suffrage of the people is still demanded before ordination, first, by the "*Si quis*," a notice that must be publicly read during Divine Service in the Church of the parish where

¹ *The Church of England as Catholic and Reformed.*

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the Candidate for Holy Orders is residing. This notice states that the candidate intends to offer himself for ordination, and if any person (*Si quis*) knows any just cause or impediment for which he ought not to be admitted to Holy Orders, he is to declare the same; and this form cannot be read, nor can a man be ordained, until he has secured a title, that is a definite sphere of work, a curacy or other position where he can exercise his ministerial office; so the "*Si quis*" implies the approval of the clergy as well as of the laity. Then further there must be the inward call from God. This is the first question put to candidates for the diaconate or priesthood, and it must be answered in the affirmative before the Bishop can proceed with the Service which gives authority to exercise the ministry.

In our case, Episcopal ordination conveys this commission and carries with it the gift enabling the mission to be fulfilled. The words of ordination are, "*Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a priest in the Church of God*"; and in using these words we express our belief that God never lays responsibility on anyone without giving him also the power to fulfil the responsibility.

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I think it is clear from all this that Sacerdotalism, with its arrogant and monstrous claims, is absolutely unwarranted. To my mind Sacerdotalism is the deadliest foe to true religion; it is a thing utterly alien from the genius of our nation.

When we turn to the Bible, the Churchman's final court of appeal, we find that nowhere in the New Testament is the word "priest" used as a title of an office, and there is nothing to lead us to suppose that any despotic power is vested either in individuals or in the community.

In face of this statement certain weighty words used in the Ordination Commission of our Church require some explanation, for, in this connexion, they are open to misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

Immediately after the words "*Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands,*" follow "*whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*"

Now this special form of words used in our service is the repetition of the words used by our Lord Himself (St. John xx.

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22, 23) when He conveyed to His Apostles their mission with a gift and a charge, and concerning them the late Bishop Westcott in his *Gospel of St. John* says, "The main thought which the words convey is that of the reality of the power of absolution from sin granted to the Church, and not of the particular organization through which the power is administered. There is nothing in the context to show that the gift was confined to any particular group (as the Apostles) among the whole company present. The commission therefore must be regarded properly as the commission of the Christian society and not as that of the Christian ministry."

It follows from this that the words as used in the ordination refer to (1) the right to exercise ecclesiastical discipline, and that they confer the right to admit or refuse admittance to the Church's sacraments, for the two weighty reasons given in the rubric of the Communion Service, i.e. open and notorious evil livers, and those betwixt whom malice and hatred reign; and (2) that they also have reference to the forgiveness of sins by God, and in this matter it is the exalted privilege of the priest to be officially

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authorized to declare and pronounce to God's people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins ; and here, as the late Bishop Dowden wisely said,¹ " Let us always bear in mind, when dealing with sinful men, that though we are *ambassadors* we are not *plenipotentiaries*. We are authorized to make clear the conditions upon the fulfilment of which the King of Heaven will grant forgiveness, and we are authorized to declare forgiveness when the conditions are accepted and complied with. But we are not plenipotentiaries, whose error or precipitancy the Court of Heaven is bound to ratify and make good."

From this it will be seen that it is not the intention of our Church to vest any despotic power in either individuals or the community ; the so-called " gift of the keys " does not permit bishops or priests, either individually or collectively, to exclude from the kingdom of heaven. For any man to claim this power is an arrogant and audacious usurpation ; to concede such power to any is a base and immoral superstition.

The power to bind or loose, to close or open the door, belongs to the whole Church,

¹ Dowden, *Further Studies in the Prayer Book*.

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and the words we are discussing refer to things or acts, prohibiting or else permitting them ; in plain English, they confer on the Church the power of making her own bye-laws.

We must remember that the words are no essentials of ordination, for no early form of ordination is found to possess them, and at the present day the American Episcopal Church, with which we are in full communion, permits in the ordination of priests the omission of the words, and in so doing does not in any way affect the validity of the ordination.

It should, therefore, be clearly understood that the clergy cannot tamper with the eternal laws of right and wrong ; they cannot by any magical rites compel the gates of heaven to open to the unfit and close against the fit ; but they can tell even the worst of sinners never to despair, for they speak in the name of Him who was the friend of sinners.

The further commission to the priest is conferred in the following terms, " Be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God and of His Holy Sacraments."

Here we have emphasized the close con-

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nexion between the Word and the Sacraments, a combination on which our Church lays the greatest stress ; for without the Word there would be no Christians, and without the Sacraments there would be no Church. And it is worth noticing what great importance our Church attaches to the Ministry of the Word, as one of the chief functions of the presbyter, for the Bishop is directed after delivering a Bible into his hand to say, " Take this authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the Holy Sacraments in the congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto."

To-day there is a tendency amongst some " advanced clergy " to regard the administration of the Sacraments as the chief function of the presbyter, but this has no sanction from the language of our Prayer Book, or in the teaching of the New Testament ; for St. Paul distinctly says that both bishops and presbyters must have the personal gift of ability to teach. *" Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching "* (1 Tim. v. 17).

It cannot, therefore, be too clearly emphasized that the principal obligation of

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every priest in the Anglican Church is this ministry of the word, by the study of Scripture, the teaching of Scripture, and obedience to Scripture ; for none but faithful dispensers of the Word can be faithful dispensers of the Sacraments. It is the Word—the Incarnate Word—within the Sacraments which imparts to them their power and splendour. Apart from Christ the Sacraments are nothing. I cordially endorse Bishop Diggle's words¹ that, "There never was an age which stood so sorely in need of the jealous maintenance of the Divine proportion between the ministry of the Word and Sacraments as the present. It is an age which, for the sake of the Sacraments themselves, needs better and truer and more constant instruction in the Word ; for the Sacraments always revert to superstitions unless they are vitalized, and their uses constantly unfolded, by the teaching of the Word. Men need to feel their need of a Saviour before they can rightly value the blessings of the Sacraments. They who love the Saviour will generally love His Sacraments also." . . . "Imminent danger lurks in the desire to have a costlier dress for the

¹ *Ministry of the Word and Sacraments*. Dr. J. W. Diggle.

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celebrant than the preacher, it is a visible sign of the disordering of the Divine order.” . . . “What the Church of England sorely needs to-day is not more ‘handsome dresses’ for her clergy, but more clergy for whom the Word of God is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path—clergy who know their Bible, both in its text and its spirit, in whom its fires burn through to the very marrow of their ministry; not professional or seminary-clergy, but clergy human in feeling, enlightened in thought, spiritual in heart and will, enthusiastically devoted to the glory of God and the service of man. Such clergy can best discharge, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, the ministry of God’s Holy Word and Sacraments for the redemption of mankind.”

Surely then our ideal should be that of saintly Bishop Ken :

Give me the priest whose graces shall possess
Of an ambassador the just address,
A father’s tenderness, a shepherd’s care,
A leader’s courage which the cross can bear,
A ruler’s awe, a watchman’s watchful eye,
A pilot’s skill the helm in storms to ply,
A fisher’s patience and a labourer’s toil,
A guide’s dexterity to disembroil,
A prophet’s inspiration from above,
A teacher’s knowledge, and a Saviour’s love.

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III. THE EPISCOPATE.

It now remains to speak of the origin and work of the episcopate.

Whilst it is very clear that at the close of the Apostolic age, the two lower orders of the threefold ministry were firmly established, the traces of the third and highest order are few and indistinct.

It is quite certain that the Apostles left no successors, and therefore to imagine that the same officers in the Church who were first called apostles came afterwards to be designated bishops is altogether baseless. Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out that the functions of the Apostle and the bishop differed very widely. The Apostle never held any local office; he was essentially a missionary. As Bishop Lightfoot further states, the history of the name "bishop" itself suggests the origin of the office. In the New Testament the word bishop is used interchangeably for presbyter, and it is most probable that the episcopate was developed out of the presbytery.

Some scholars think that it is in the Mother Church of Jerusalem that we find the first traces of this finally developed form of the Christian ministry. James, the Lord's

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brother, can alone claim to be regarded as a bishop in the sense of a presiding elder, or presbyter; but it is clear that episcopacy in our modern sense, i.e. monarchical episcopacy, is not to be found in the New Testament at all. From the Acts we learn that James presided over the Apostles and the elders, at the Council of Jerusalem, concerning the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian Church. But while the episcopal office thus existed in a rudimentary form in Jerusalem, the New Testament gives no hint of any such like organization in the Gentile congregations. In fact in the Pastoral Epistles the titles "presbyters" and "bishops" are equally applied to the same persons.

According to Bishop John Wordsworth¹ a dispassionate study of the evidence available leads us to these conclusions.

- (1) That the three orders, as orders of bishops, presbyters and deacons, existed from the time of the apostles in certain parts of the Church, especially in Palestine and Syria.
- (2) That in some other parts, especially in Rome and Alexandria, there were at first only two orders, presbyters and

¹ *The Ministry of Grace.*

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deacons, the governing order acting normally as a corporate body or college.

- (3) That in process of time, and more particularly in the course of the third century, this governing order tended more and more to act in the matter of ordination through its presidents.

From this it will be seen that the office of a bishop as we understand it, grew up gradually and that it was created out of the presbytery. We must look upon its creation not as an isolated act but rather a progressive development, not advancing everywhere at a uniform rate, for historically we know that it was slower in those churches where the prevailing influences were Greek, as at Corinth, and Philippi, and Rome, and more rapid where the Oriental spirit predominated, as at Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus.

The pressing needs of the Church were mainly instrumental in bringing about the development of the episcopate. It was seen to be a centre of unity and a safeguard amid the confusion of speculative opinion and the growing anarchy of social life, which in the early centuries threatened not only the extension but the very existence of the infant Church.

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Ignatius of Antioch, in the first quarter of the second century, stands as the strongest advocate of episcopacy in the early ages, and he points out that the chief value of the office lies in the fact that it constitutes a visible centre of unity in the congregation; but the further extravagant claims of Ignatius when he says, in language forcible to the verge of blasphemy, "We ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself" were not allowed to pass unchallenged. Montanism was a democratic reaction which did battle against this extravagance and fought for the freedom of the individual spirit, but it was excommunicated and died out, till it re-appeared under a different form in Quakerism.

It is worthy of note that in Ignatius the bishop appears as the head of a single congregation and not as the representative of the whole Church; there is no distinction of order among the bishops and no trace of a primacy. The Ignatian episcopacy is congregational and not diocesan, and it appears as a new and growing institution rather than a settled policy of Apostolic origin.¹

Irenæus, who followed Ignatius after an

¹ See Dr. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. I.

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interval of about two generations (he died in A.D. 202), represents the institution as a diocesan office, and looks upon the bishop as the guarantee for the transmission of the pure faith, and the depositary of the Apostolic tradition. It is from his writing that we learn the first meaning of Apostolic Succession; he points to the Church of Rome, whose episcopal pedigree he considers perfect in all its links, and whose earliest bishops, Linus and Clement, associated with the Apostles themselves. Further, "there is the Church of Smyrna again, whose Bishop Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, died only the other day."

Passing on for another two generations, we come to Cyprian, who died in A.D. 258, and who raised the episcopate to a position of absolute independence from which it has never since been deposed.

With these three names we can well trace the development of the office. If with Ignatius the bishop is the centre of Christian unity, with Irenæus he is the depositary of the apostolic tradition, and with Cyprian he becomes the absolute vicegerent of Christ in things spiritual. Cyprian stands out as the champion of undisguised sacerdotalism and the father of the Papacy.

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It was only by degrees that the arrangements were made which we find in the later Middle Ages, where the clerical system was brought to maturity. It was one of the objects of the False Decretals in the ninth century to get rid of the country bishops and to bring all the small towns and villages under the control of the diocesan bishops. We know that for long after the Apostolic age each village had its own bishop, and there is a witness to this older state of things in the fact that in Italy, where church organization grew up at the earlier stage of development, there are some six hundred bishops, while in England, which was organized on the later diocesan system, there have never been more than about thirty.¹

From this brief outline it will be seen that episcopacy may well be termed the primitive form of Church government, in so far as it can be traced back continuously to the sub-Apostolic age; and historically we know that it has been maintained in the largest part of Christendom since the Reformation, whilst we have ample evidence that up to the sixteenth century it was universal

¹ For this information I am indebted to Dean Fremantle, *Christian Ordinances*, Nobel Lectures, 1900.

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throughout the Church. Even then there would have been no thought of repudiating it anywhere had the bishops been more worthy of their office. Melancthon expressed his willingness even to recognize the primacy of the Pope as a matter of human order, if only he would allow the Gospel to be preached. The Augsburg Confession says—"We would willingly preserve the Ecclesiastical and Canonical Government if the bishops would only cease to exercise cruelty upon our Churches." Fortunately, the bishops seem to have been of a better stamp in England; at any rate, our Church has always taken the utmost care to keep up the succession, and for us Anglican Churchmen, who accept the episcopal form of government as essential to the well-being of the Church, Dr. Plummer well says,¹ "The enormous prescription which that form has acquired during at least seventeen centuries is such ample justification that we can afford to be serene as to the ultimate outcome of inquiries respecting the constitution of the various infant churches from A.D. 85 to 185. It makes no practical difference either to add or not to add to an authority which is

¹ Plummer, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Expository Bible.

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already ample." We therefore honour episcopacy as a most ancient and venerable form of Church government, and as having certain advantages which no other form of ministry possesses.

The episcopate embodies the principle of continuity with the past. It forms a link between the Church of to-day and the Church of primitive times. It stands in idea for the authority of the whole Church, and it secures that the ordained man shall be regarded not as the minister of a sect but of the Church.

From these considerations it will be seen why we Anglican Churchmen cannot abandon "The Historic Episcopate" without renouncing the link which connects us with the Primitive Church. We do not unchurch those who through no fault of their own are without the credentials which we consider necessary, we will not say to the "esse" but to the "bene esse" of a Church, for there can be no doubt that those Churches of the Reformation who gave up episcopacy did so with extreme reluctance. In fact we may say that most non-episcopal theories of the ministry in the early Church have been evolved controversially to justify the Churches that have abandoned Episcopal rule.

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In this present age, conscious of "the great danger we are in by our unhappy divisions," some of the ablest and best men in our Church are willing to make every concession in their power, short of abandoning our birthright, to draw nearer to those who are separated from us, not so much by doctrine as by discipline, and to obtain unity.

In Scotland the late Bishop Wordsworth's proposals should never be forgotten; he considered that the Church should be willing to admit existing Presbyterian ministers to minister in the episcopal Church, on the understanding that all future clergy should be episcopally ordained, and he also suggested that certain eminent Presbyterian ministers should be consecrated as bishops *per saltum*, as has happened more than once in the history of Scotland.

In view of this happy consummation it is well to remember that there is episcopacy and episcopacy. Episcopacy is not the same thing as prelacy or autocracy; the days are far gone by when it could be said that the Divine rights of monarchy and episcopacy stood or fell together. "No bishop, no king," as King James the first was so fond of saying, really meant the attempt of the Stuart

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Kings to govern on the same obsolete principles as the Tudors and ended in the downfall of the dynasty, whilst the belated attempt of Archbishop Laud to assume despotic episcopacy led to the downfall of the Church in Scotland and his own death on the scaffold.

I cannot but deplore the ambiguity of the theory of Apostolic Succession. It has in modern days been emphasized in such a way as to isolate the Anglican Church from the non-episcopal Churches of Europe—Churches with which so high a Churchman as Bishop Cosin communicated without any scruples, and Archbishop Usher loved and venerated as “true members of the Church Universal.”

The belief in the divine right of bishops may be compared to the closely allied belief in the divine right of kings; both were possible till it was known how these offices came into being. So long as it was believed that they were directly of God's appointment, a divinity hedged them; but when it became clear that they were historical growths, then it was seen that they were made for man and not man for them.

Now as an ecclesiastical theory it should be clearly understood that Apostolical

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Succession is not impregnable. It has been truly said that the strength of a chain is no greater than the strength of its weakest link ; and in the chain of the Apostolical Succession there are more weak links than one. Hooker's words are worth re-considering on this question in view of that re-union with non-episcopal Churches which is so much to be desired : " Where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain, in case of such necessity the ordinary institution of God hath given often times, and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination. These cases of inevitable necessity excepted, none may ordain but only bishops ; by the imposition of their hands it is that the Church giveth power of order, both unto presbyters and deacons."

It is now generally admitted by all scholarly theologians that no one can trace a distinct order of bishops right back without interruption to the time of the Apostles in all parts of the Christian world. The lists given by Eusebius of bishops in various churches

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are not considered by scholars to be entirely trustworthy. Nevertheless on the whole question of Apostolic Succession we can truly say that if any Church, Roman or Greek, has it, the Anglican Church has it equally strongly. For the continuity of the Church of England is beyond dispute; I have only to remind you that the great majority of the English clergy remained in unbroken possession of their benefices all through the Reformation period; the bishops continued to sit in the House of Lords by the same titles as before; the convocations continued to sit side by side with every Parliament as before, and the *Congé d'élire* by which Parker was elected to succeed Cardinal Pole as Archbishop of Canterbury asserts the identity of the existing Church with what had gone before. We can state therefore with perfect conviction that at the Reformation our Church was neither established nor re-established nor re-constructed, but reformed. It was the same Church, only purified. As the English Ambassador at Venice replied to the courtier who asked the question, "Where was your Church before the Reformation?" "Signor, where was your face before you washed it?" Hooker

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expressed the same truth when he wrote¹ "To reform ourselves, if at any time we have done amiss, is not to sever ourselves from the Church we were of before." We can therefore fearlessly assert that no other Church has ever displaced her, and if her children do their duty no other Church ever will.

The rite which the Church of Rome has transformed into a sacrament conveying the grace of ordination has no title to that claim from an Anglican point of view. No special rite for appointing ministers, or special persons by whom alone that rite is to be administered, appears in the New Testament; still less can we find the idea that a priestly virtue, qualifying the possessor to change, in any sense, in the Holy Communion, the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, was lodged in the Apostles, and then ordered to be transferred to the bishops, and so continued until the end of time. The claim "no priest, no eucharist," cannot be sustained by the appeal to the early Church.

The real grace of our ministerial system is the grace of useful Christian leadership and

¹ *Ecclesiastical Polity* iii. 1-10.

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service. The true Apostolic Succession resides in the Church life, and not in the Church officials except as the commissioned organs of Church life.

Now whilst it is quite clear that in the early Church the bishop had a quasi-monarchical authority over his diocese, yet it was a constitutional monarchy exercised in consultation with his presbyters; even Cyprian says that the bishop should do nothing without his presbyters. The presbyters, together with him, formed the Episcopal Council, the bishop presiding over them as a fellow-presbyter; it was also the common usage for the presbyters to join with the bishop in the laying-on of hands in the case of ordination, and their presence and ministry at the ordination of presbyters was generally considered necessary. It was also customary for the presbyters to take part with the bishop in the celebrations of the Holy Communion. They stood with him round the Holy Table and "offered the gifts" in co-operation with him. The late Bishop John Wordsworth in his *Ministry of Grace* says that the absence of this from our own service is a point to be regretted, "as the cessation of the practice has allowed too deep a line to

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be drawn between a bishop and his presbyters, and has led to an independence on both sides which is dangerous, and sometimes all but fatal." From this consideration, there can be no doubt that the episcopate of our Church has been conspicuously more autocratic and less constitutional than it was in the early days of Ignatius or Irenæus or even Cyprian; and whilst in the past this can be explained by the close relationship that existed between the state and the Church, in the Middle Ages the bishop being a great feudal lord having considerable temporal power, to-day such absolutist episcopacy is useless.

In order to return to the truer and primitive ideal we want a very considerable increase in the number of our bishops. It is little less than a scandal, that by reason of the unwieldy size of some dioceses in England, bishops should be unknown to the majority of their laity and comparative strangers to their clergy; in most cases the modern diocese should be drastically subdivided. In fact we ought to have at least one bishop in every large town, and thus prevent that feeling of chilling neglect and lack of sympathy which the clergy sometimes feel about their

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official superiors. And only in this way shall we be able to break down the prejudices of our non-episcopal brethren and remove their scruples of prelacy.

Then, further, I cannot help thinking that it would be well in most cases if the age for the consecration of a bishop were raised from the present minimum age of thirty to at least forty or forty-five. The elder clergy in a diocese can scarcely look upon a young bishop as a Father-in-God; a man of thirty or thereabouts naturally lacks that balance of mind which comes only by prolonged thought and the experience of years; and unless every bishop has had some experience in direct pastoral work he can neither appreciate nor understand the difficulties of the clergyman's work, nor can he display in his treatment of the clergy that adequate sense of justice and sympathy which is looked for from his office.

In conclusion, let us never forget that the grandest political action of the Reformation was that it replaced the clergy in the position of citizens; it made the highest moral interests of clergy and laity identical. I am sure that a pressing danger of the present day is forgetfulness of this fact. "I am convinced

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that the professional pretences of clericalism are amongst the most deadly foes of the clergy. They tend to fix a great gulf between them and their fellow Christians in the abysses of which are lost much of that brotherly trust and cordial sympathy, much also of that unity of understanding and goodwill which are so essential to the upward progress of the Church of Christ." So says Dr. Diggle, the Bishop of Carlisle, and to all who watch the movements of modern life there can be no doubt that Ecclesiastical-mindedness, whether in clergy or laity, is a great barrier to Church fellowship, and a great impediment to the re-union and co-operation of Christians.

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I stood beside thee in the holy place,
And saw the Holy Sprinkling on thy brow,
And was both bond and witness to the Vow,
Which own'd thy need, confirm'd thy claims of Grace ;
That sacred Sign which time shall not efface,
Declared thee His to whom all Angels bow.

H. COLERIDGE.

“ Let it be sufficient for me presenting myself at the Lord's table to know what there I receive from Him, without searching or inquiring of the manner how Christ performeth His promise . . . what these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ, His promise in witness hereof sufficeth, His word He knoweth which way to accomplish ; why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, O my God, thou art true, O my soul, thou art happy.”

HOOKE.

What if they fail to find who seek amiss ?
To lose the centre is to lose the whole :
To such reporters be our answer this,
“ I know Him through my soul. . . .”
One Christ for all, and fully Christ for each ;
So haply, as at Eucharist we knelt,
Something that thrilled us more than touch or speech
Has made its presence felt.
And round us drawn a lucid atmosphere
Of self-commending truth and love and might,
And raised our faith from hearing of the ear
To sweet foretaste of sight.

BRIGHT.

VII

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“THE tendency of human nature before its full At-one-ment to Divine life is to constant division. Religion has been implanted in man to break down the walls of separation between man and man, between man and God. All ordinances, therefore, which set forth the realities of life as one in God, are means for promoting the end of religion, which is universal sympathy and fellowship with the highest Will and Life.”

In such words the author of *The Gospel of Divine Humanity* sets forth the meaning of sacraments, and in this sense it can be truly said,¹ “A Christianity without Sacraments could never have converted Europe”; the need of Sacraments has been universally felt

¹ *Contentio Veritatis*. The Sacraments. Dean Inge, p. 279.

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by mankind, and it has been always met in much the same way—by attributing a mysterious efficacy to certain prescribed symbolical acts, which have been generally chosen from the simplest and commonest functions of ordinary life, such as washing and eating.

The word Sacrament is older than Christianity. The Latin word *Sacramentum*, from which the word is derived, signifies the military oath which was taken by a recruit after enlistment in the Roman army, and denotes a solemn pledge of faith on the part of the receiver. Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, A.D. 104, in which he speaks of the Christians, mentions their “meeting on a certain day, and binding themselves by a sacrament to commit no wickedness.” As Pliny reports what the Christians told him, it is probable that they made use of the word *Sacramentum* in the Christian sense, for in the Vulgate we find the word *Sacramentum* used as a translation of the Greek *μυστήριον*, “mystery” (Eph. v. 32; 1 Tim. iii. 16, etc.). Now this word had a clearly defined meaning in religious language, and we find it was adopted as a regular name for the Christian Sacraments by the large majority of the early

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Church who spoke Greek. The word "*mystery*" primarily suggested symbolism. It stood first for that outward form by which an act was validly performed; "one thing is seen, another is understood." Augustine says, "The outward is the ground for the inward."

And in accordance with this, our English Church defines a sacrament as "An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." In this definition, the words "ordained by Christ Himself" limit the Christian Sacraments to the two ceremonial acts which alone were imposed by Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the one He adopted, the other He created as the material conditions of spiritual culture.

We are told that there are two distinct parts in a Sacrament, "the outward and visible sign" and the "inward and spiritual grace," and these two ideas must be kept clearly and distinctly apart, or we at once fall into confusion of thought.

The outward sign as really and truly conveys the inward gift as the parchment

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deed, duly "signed, sealed, and delivered," conveys property to the purchaser; and our Church very distinctly teaches that the one part of the Sacrament is a means of receiving the other; unless we receive the outward and visible sign which Christ has ordained, we have no right to expect the inward and spiritual gift which He has promised.

The Sacraments of the Gospel are "means of grace," accessible channels of spiritual power, ordained by Christ Himself, and, as regards the method of their operation, if we ask how the symbols convey the grace which they express, the answer is that the change must be in ourselves, and not in either God or external nature.

Let us never forget that God is already reconciled to us in Christ. Therefore it is quite unnecessary for us either to offer any new expiatory sacrifice to Him, or "to plead" any old one as if He were in danger of forgetting this covenant. The change to be produced is in ourselves only; and it is needless to say that we cannot cleanse our souls by washing our bodies, or assimilate the merits of Christ by eating His flesh; for, as Hooker says, "It is not the elements by

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themselves, but the faithful participation of them which confers grace."

We hold that the Sacraments are real means of grace, and we believe that they were selected and ordained as such by Christ to be means of union and communion with Himself.

If matter be the living garment of God, as we know it is the temporary raiment of man, and if the Divine Spirit be immanent in everything that exists, then it is easy to understand the benefit of Sacraments without falling into a low materialism.

"Had they been arbitrarily chosen things, we might," as Dr. Illingworth says,¹ "perhaps have been content to call them symbols. But they are very far indeed from being arbitrary inventions. They have a history behind them as old as humanity, and a context around them as wide as the world; and they point us back to Sacramental customs of immemorial age." . . . And if, as he goes on to show, these earlier rites derived reality and value from God's immanence in the world, and found Him at particular times and places because He is everywhere present and ready to be found,

¹ Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*.

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the Christian sacraments must possess this reality in its highest degree. In their case it is further strengthened by the fact that they are Divine commands, and they carry with them the direct promise of a personal response to the personal allegiance which they claim. "When Christ ordained Sacraments, He selected, as their media, the two simplest, most symbolical, most universal religious rites—the sacred ablution and the sacred feast—and raised and re-enacted them in their purest forms to be thenceforward means of union with Himself."

In the Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—the essentials of life, spiritual and natural, are fully comprehended. All life consists in a constant purification from defilements, and in the assimilation or transformation of the lower nature into the higher.

BAPTISM.

"The Sacrament of Admission."

"Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan"
(Mark i. 9; Matt. iii. 13; Luke iii. 21).

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"
(Matt. xxviii. 19).

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ART. XXVII. *Of Baptism.*

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

* * * * *

“BAPTISM,” it has been said, “is the oldest ceremonial ordinance that Christianity possesses; it is the only one which is inherited from Judaism.” Immersion of the body in water is naturally symbolical and suggestive of purification; so, in the sacrament of Baptism, the one essential of entrance into the kingdom of God is visibly set forth. It is a kingdom into which nothing unclean can enter, yet in Baptism the right of every man to inherit the kingdom is declared, and the condition of admission revealed.

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The gospel of the kingdom is, that all can be made pure and fit to enter into fellowship with the Father of their spirits, because all men are *Sons of God*.

Baptism, therefore, is the token of an universal Church; it is not the symbol of a sect or the badge of a party; it is a visible witness to the world of a common humanity united in God.

Baptism proclaims, but does not create, every man the child of God; if it did, it would not be a sacrament, but an event. The word and act of Baptism imply that the person baptized belongs to the Lord independently of the ordinance.

Baptism, therefore, does not make the fact, but it reveals it with authority; it is not a conjuring trick by which something starts into being within the child or man which was not there before.

Water, "the outward and visible sign" of baptism, is, as Archdeacon Wilberforce says,¹ "Symbolical of the Spirit, and a beautiful and accurate symbol, for water is not an element, but the result of the union of two elements, neither of which it is, without both of which it could not be, and

¹ *The Secret of a Quiet Mind*, p. 123.

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with both of which it is indivisibly one. So the Holy Spirit is not a separate Deity, but the outflowing life of God in universal being, and God Incarnate, neither of which it is, but without both of which it could not be, and with both of which it is indivisibly one."

The water can do no more than common water; the virtue of washing is not that it imparts anything to the washed, but rather that it removes obstructions to the inflowing and outflowing of life. No man washes what is intrinsically vile; the washing implies that it is worth washing. And the sacrament of Holy Baptism is the earnest and promise of the continual cleansing and renewing through life of the Divine Spirit, Who claims through the conscience every heart for God.

We pray to "Almighty God . . . who by the Baptism of His well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the River Jordan, didst sanctify Water to the mystical washing away of sin" and, in the use of this outward and visible sign, we believe that an inward and spiritual grace is always to be claimed, for by Baptism we are enabled by God's grace to put off all that hinders us from

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knowing what we truly are—sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

The Didachê, or "*Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*," one of the earliest works of Christian literature, which is quoted as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria (d. 220) and discovered in 1875, enjoins baptism, after catechetical instruction, in these words: "Baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living (running) water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold then in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

There can be no doubt that in its original institution, and according to the general practice of the early Christians, Baptism was by complete immersion, and this, we can readily understand, was a better type of complete purification than either sprinkling or pouring; but even in primitive times it was seen that ordinances were made for man, not man for ordinances.

The genius of Christianity, as a living spiritual religion, is wholly adverse to scrupulosity regarding externals. As we touch

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nature equally in a grain of sand as in a mountain, the less or more of Matter in respect of Spirit is of small consequence.

Therefore, whether by immersion or sprinkling, Baptism is to us the outward sign of "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness" to which the Christian in this act of public confession commits himself.

When our Lord commanded His Apostles to baptize, He set apart baptism to be the Sacrament of a birth. Now the natural meaning of birth is not that we receive life, but that we are introduced into new conditions of life. So, "to be born again," or "regenerated," as the dogmatic phrase has it, is to be introduced into new spiritual conditions.

By being received into the family of God's people, incorporated into the Church, the baptized is introduced into new conditions, which are the atmosphere of Christian faith, that communion and fellowship of Christian life where the new life, the life in Christ, may be nourished and grow.

Our IXth Article very plainly declares the benefit of Baptism when it says, "There is no condemnation for them that believe and

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are baptized," that is, for those who, by repentance—a decisive act of the will, and faith—a public confession of belief, have placed themselves in right relations with God.

In the case of infants, who cannot understand what is meant either by repentance or faith, Baptism is simply a dedication of the child to Christ; it declares the child to be by birthright "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven": it is a visible revelation of the truth that the Divine Nature is the true being of every child, and that the human nature is capable of reconciliation with the spiritual nature through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The institution of *sponsors*, first mentioned by Tertullian (d. A.D. 220) arose no doubt from infant baptism, and was designed to secure Christian training, without thereby excusing Christian parents from their Divine obligation to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The baptized child has been made a member of the Church of Christ; he has been admitted into the greatest Society in the world, in consequence of the faith and desire of

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others. And surely this faith and desire bear witness to the solidarity of the Christian body, for in it, though the wants and responsibilities of the individual are never overlooked, there is always forcibly impressed upon him the fact that he is one of a vast brotherhood of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, the mystical body of Christ.

“ God’s child in Christ adopted—Christ my all—
What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather
Than forfeit that blest name, by which I call
The Holy One, the Almighty God, My Father ?
Father ! In Christ we live, and Christ in Thee—
Eternal Thou : and everlasting We !
The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear no death ;
In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life ! ”

Now, as F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, said, this view of Baptism prevents all exclusiveness and spiritual pride, all condemnation and contempt of others ; for it admits all to be God’s children ; it proclaims a kingdom, not for a few favourites, but for all mankind ; it protests against the idea that Sonship depends upon feeling ; it asserts rather that it is a broad, grand, universal, and blessed fact. “ *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God.* ”

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“Hail, then, hail to you all ! To the heirdom of heaven
be ye welcome !—
Children no more from this day, but by covenant,
brothers and sisters.
Yet,—for what reason not children ? of such is the
kingdom of heaven.
Here upon earth an assemblage of children, in heaven
one Father
Ruling them all as His household.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

“The Sacrament of Membership.”

“And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My Body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you” (Luke xxii. 19, 20 ; Mark xiv. 22, 23, 24 ; Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28 ; 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25, 26).

ART. XXVIII. *Of the Lord's Supper.*

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another ; but rather is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death : insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same,

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the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

* * * * *

IF, as we have seen, in Baptism we have the initiation rite into the body of Christ's Church, in the Lord's Supper we have the privilege of full membership, the great central act of worship, the great bond of union and fellowship.

The Lord's Supper is the Sacrament of love, for it takes the act of brotherly communion, which is the expression of affection, and labels it Holy. The pity is that this

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Sacrament, which was meant to be the very bond of peace, the sign and pledge of Christian love, has been the bone of contention around which has been carried on the theological wranglings of centuries. Men have persisted in seeing in it a sign when they had the Apostle's word that "*Signs shall fail*"; they have sought to identify it with knowledge, when he had declared that "*Knowledge vanisheth away*"; they have missed in it the "*love which never faileth.*"

Now at the outset let us understand that Jesus Christ Himself is the Sacrament of God. He is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual Mind of the Infinite, and He has manifested for all time the great All-Fatherly Heart of God.

And as His last ministerial act He instituted the Holy Communion. "*He took bread and blessed it, and said, Take, eat, this is My Body. . . . He took the cup saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is My Blood.*"

His visible presence was about to be removed, and so He institutes this Sacrament as a parting legacy to His flock, to be for ever a special contact point—a ceremony in which the world of sense and the world of spirit should touch and blend.

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The Holy Communion, therefore, was given to us, not to make a Presence that was not there before—for the risen Christ is omnipresent—but to focus specially, at an agreed-upon time, and in a Divinely appointed ordinance, the eternal truth of the universal Presence. “Because God is everywhere, He can appear anywhere, while because man is not everywhere, but limited to a particular time and place, his relation to God must be realized under the like particular conditions.”¹

In the Holy Communion, therefore, we come to meet our Saviour, to worship Him, and realize the Eternal truth of the Universal Presence “*in Whom we live, and move, and have our being*”; and in it we consecrate ourselves to His Service. It is the appointed means whereby we receive the Spiritual help we need for our soul’s welfare; in it we declare our loving allegiance to Christ, and it is to us the pledge of God’s faithfulness.

The history of the Holy Communion is almost co-extensive with the history of Christianity. To trace it through all its changes would be to write the history of the Christian Church.

The late Canon Meyrick pointed out (in

¹ Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*.

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a little book published some thirty years ago) that¹ "we must combine the ideas of remembrance, sacrifice, feeding, incorporation, and pledge if we would attain as nearly to a complete notion and apprehension of the Lord's Supper as the nature of the mystery will admit, but if we regard any one of these ideas alone as an adequate expression of this Sacrament we shall only have a partial and warped conception of its full significance."

It will be therefore convenient for our discussion if I follow this advice as fully as may be under five heads.

I. And first we notice that the Anglican Church places the REMEMBRANCE of the sacrifice of Christ as the end and object for which the Holy Communion was instituted.

The Catechism teaches us that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

In the prayer of Consecration the words are, "Who did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death, until His

¹ *The Doctrine of the Holy Communion.*

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coming again ” ; and as we receive the consecrated elements we are again reminded, “ Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee.”—“ Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for thee.”

Of old the object of the Paschal Supper was remembrance, but with the death of Christ the significance of this commemoration was abolished, and a new remembrance instituted in which Christ is remembered, as “ *our Passover sacrifice for us,*” our Redeemer, and Saviour. And here let me say that the Holy Communion was not instituted as a memorial of a fallen leader or a divine victim, but to recall the Conqueror who knew that in death the hour of victory had come. We gather together to take part in a remembrance of God’s consummate victory over sin ; “ *by His death He hath destroyed death.*” And out of our remembrance of Him there comes naturally our return of praise and self-devotion ; in a purely spiritual act of faith we appropriate Christ and make Him the utterance of our offering to God.

But not only was this ordinance to be a memorial of Christ’s death, it was to be a vivid presentation of the place of self-sacrifice in human redemption and in human life, and

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in this sense as a remembrance it is a means of Christian instruction.

And as a spectacle, when seen by the eye of faith this memorial of Christ, beginning with the self-emptying of the Incarnation and culminating in the death on the Cross, is infinitely inspiring.

The very existence of the Holy Communion, and of the day when the disciples meet "*to break bread*," is one of the proofs of the Resurrection. It explains the law of service and reminds us of what we ought to be and do. The pity has been that this symbolic remembrance has been hardened into that of an actual continuation or repetition of that sacrifice. After the great influx of pagans into the Church we find a growing tendency which is entirely pagan to use materialistic language about the sacred elements.

2. The work of Christ commemorated in the Holy Communion is what enables us to offer more or less imperfectly the one TRUE SACRIFICE—the sacrifice of the Will which He once offered perfectly. Now this word sacrifice is so closely associated with errors into which religion is ever prone to fall, that men like Hooker and Lightfoot have regretted the use of the word. To avoid these errors

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let us understand that the earliest idea of sacrifice was Eucharistic. The sacrifice was not a propitiatory offering, but a feast in which the Infinite Spirit became the guest of man. In generating the fire by the friction of two pieces of wood, man was considered to be evoking the immanent Divine principle, and his offering of bread and wine, partly consumed by himself and his fellow men, and partly ascending by combustion, was a symbol of human life blending with the Divine ; and even when at later times the sacrifice was animal, its significance lay, not in the death of the animal, but in the Eucharistic meal which followed. Later still came in the propitiatory idea, where the idea of sacrifice was a communion of the worshipper and the God through the blood of some victim, and, as this conception became rooted in the human mind, we may well believe with Archdeacon Wilberforce that the Infinite loving Father Spirit accepted the instinct, just as a loving earthly father will accept from a child some intrinsically worthless gift. He regulated it through Moses and his successors, purified and checked it through the prophets, and finally satisfied it for ever on Calvary ; so that timid hearts who still hankered after

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propitiation and those who still clung to the conception inherited from the blood shed on heathen altars, might take refuge in that interpretation, and have "*boldness to enter into the holiest.*"

The true nature of this sacrifice of Christ is clearly expressed in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which emphatically contradicts this pagan conception of propitiation and asserts that the only sacrifice demanded by God is a yielded will and a forcible change of thinking. "*For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.*"

In the prayer of Oblation, which originally was part of the Consecration prayer, we ask our Heavenly Father to accept "our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," and in its original position this prayer brought out very clearly the whole idea of Sacrifice, connecting the "Remembrance" of the one great Sacrifice with our Eucharistic Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and the climax was reached in our Dedicatory sacrifice of ourselves, "our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice."

True self-sacrifice must always be for the love of other men, for all true sacrifice is

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essentially sharing ; that a man finds his real life, his true self, in giving up the lower life for others—this is the very essence of the Gospel which Christ taught to the world by His life and by His death.

3. We next come to the question, “ How do we receive Christ in the Holy Communion ? ” For it is A FEEDING ON CHRIST.

This is a question round which controversy has raged long and loud. The grossly materialistic doctrine which teaches that we actually eat the body and blood of Christ, veiled under the elements of the bread and wine, is the result of an hypothesis which grew up in the ninth century among a rude and uninstructed people, and gradually forced its way into the theology of the Western Church in the eleventh century. I need hardly say that it is opposed to the true and honest interpretation of Scripture.

At the Reformation our Church took what we may call the common-sense view of the meaning of our Lord's words, and repudiated transubstantiation altogether (which really is a theory about bread and wine rather than about Christ's presence). But as many advanced Churchmen now appear to have returned to mediæval theology, and to have

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reintroduced something very like this dogma, it will be well to show that the only legitimate interpretation of our Lord's words, "*This is My body,*" is, that "*is*" can only mean "*represents.*" No one need be a Greek or Hebrew scholar in order to know that when two things are connected by the verb "*to be*" as subject and predicate, they are not identical but representative.

When our Lord set apart bread and wine for the Holy Communion, He would have used the Greek verb for "*becomes*" instead of "*is*" if He had intended any change to have taken place in the elements; further, I note that the union of which our Lord spoke when He uttered the words of consecration already existed. The Apostles did not become His body by eating the bread, they were already His body, members of which He was the Head; and after consecration we find that He still spoke of the wine as "*the fruit of the vine,*" and St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 27, 28) continues to call the bread *bread* after consecration. In our own act of consecration, which is simply a rehearsal of the institution, the prayer is a petition that the outward and inward things may go on concurrently—"That we, receiving these Thy creatures of bread and

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wine," may at the same time " be partakers of His most blessed body and blood."

But if the actual reported words of our Lord be taken in the most extreme literal sense, they can never bear the signification put upon them by the theologians of the Council of Trent.

For if they be thus taken it is plain that they point to a separation of the body from the blood, and cannot be reconciled with any theory of "concomitancy" whereby "the body" is conceived to contain also "the blood," and "the blood" not to exist apart from "the body." If there ever were a change wrought in the elements of bread and wine, it must have been on the occasion when our Lord Himself was Himself the consecrator. All questions as to the nature of the body of His Resurrection are, therefore, utterly out of place. If the words ever required a "transubstantiation" of the bread and wine to follow their utterance, it was at the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. But to interpret them in that exceedingly forced manner is inconsistent with the acknowledgment of Christ's real humanity, and is, we maintain, a virtual denial of the truth that "*Jesus is come in the flesh*" (1 John iv. 2).

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Moreover, in the second place, these words do not contain the slightest allusion to the presence of Christ's "soul and divinity" with the bread and the wine, of which Christ was then speaking.

Further, they are utterly inconsistent with the affirmation that "a whole Christ" is imparted under each "kind," that is, under both the bread and the wine. They can only, when literally interpreted, be explained to speak of the *dead* Christ, not of the *living*. For only in death did the separation spoken of take place; and then Christ's body became separated from His blood, and from His soul and divinity. It was to render such a separation possible that Christ took upon Himself "*flesh and blood*," as is significantly pointed out in Heb. xi. 14. The separation of soul and body at Christ's death is distinctly taught in all the ancient commentaries of the Church.

It is to this fact our Lord alludes when He refers to the separation in His case of body and blood. For no sacrifice was ever offered in Jewish times in which the body and blood were not thus separated the one from the other; the flesh burned on the altar, the blood poured out around its base.

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Again, the language used by our Blessed Lord points distinctly to His death on the Cross as if it had already taken place, for He speaks as a prophet, and uses prophetic language, which language is not to be interpreted in any bald, literal manner, but as speaking of that death and blood-shedding which took place a few hours later.

Our XXVIIIth Article further explains the mind of the Church when it states, "the Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith." This should have been enough once and for all, to condemn the mass of Materialistic and Manichæan ideas which have been developed round this Sacrament of love ; ideas which have been the parents of superstition, and have led to the material elements being *reserved* for the purpose of keeping a local so-called "Presence of Christ," where He might be adored, and worshipped, and carried about in procession, ideas which are entirely condemned by our Church.

In the bread and wine we English Churchmen, if we are true to our Prayer Book, see nothing but God's creatures set apart for a

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very sacred purpose, in obedience to Christ's command. The elements on the altar which we receive are the signs and vehicles of the Life which is obedient unto death, and which we receive that it may become our own. The bold metaphors of eating flesh and drinking blood are meant to teach men that they must make Christ their Divine nutriment, they must absorb His mind, incorporate His character into their being, just as food is incorporated into the body ; in other words, our union with Christ must be so close and real, that the very Spirit which dwells in Him must pass into our souls and become their nourishment and inspiration, for our Divine Life—the germ of Divinity—which God implants in each soul born in the world, can only grow through the continuous assimilation of Divine life which Christ offers to us in the Holy Communion.

In a sense every meal we take is sacramental; but man does not live by bread alone, for that ministers only to his animal life. Man lives by every word of God, by intellectual and spiritual truth. So every thought we receive, every truth we make our own, is equally sacramental if God is recognized as the giver and the gift.

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But humanity has not yet reached this perfect consciousness of the abiding presence of God. It is needful, therefore, that we should strive to discern Him somewhere; and on special occasions, through the symbols of bread and wine, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, the one complete specimen of the human race, are recognized as becoming for us and our brethren the flesh and blood of every son of man and the Divinely appointed means by which we may know ourselves truly Sons of God; for in this Sacrament the whole nature, body and spirit, is brought into contact with Christ.

So for all time the faithful find Christ at His own table. But we find Him there, not because our worship draws Him down to us, but because as we worship He draws us to Himself.

Further, by communicating His life to us, Jesus Christ is ever, as a matter of actual human experience, taking away the sins of the whole world. The reality of the Divine Presence lies not in the material elements, but in the hearts of the faithful Communicants who receive them; therefore I do not think that the anxious and ostentatious reverence which we often see paid to the un-

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consumed elements is either wise or wholesome. By the words of Administration in our Prayer Book we are expressly reminded that the elements of bread and wine are to be taken "*in remembrance,*" and our *feeding is to be "in the heart by faith with thanksgiving."*

Christ has been known to many besides those friends at Emmaus in the breaking of bread, for there is under the conditions of every Celebration a Divine magnetism quickening all the faculties of the soul ; virtue goes out from the Holy Communion as from the body of Christ.

As regards Fasting Communion, a natural result of the false doctrines of Transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass, I can find no sanction for it, either in the Bible or the teaching of our Church. Where the practice is insisted on—and we are told that it is irreverent and wrong to allow any food to enter the body before that which is considered to have become, not only to the soul and to faith but also to the digestive organs, the Body of the Lord—we may reasonably ask, why on this principle it should be more irreverent that ordinary food should precede this so-called taking of the Body of the Lord, than that it should immediately succeed it ? As a matter

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of fact such a rule is simply arbitrary and has no foundation or warrant from Scripture. At the first celebration, neither our Lord nor His Apostles were fasting, for it was after supper that He took bread and blessed the cup ; and the Didaché expressly tells us that in the Early Church the Holy Communion immediately followed a common meal. The question of fasting, therefore, is a matter in which each individual may please himself ; if it helps any to bring their minds into a proper state of devotion, by all means let them practise it, provided they do not thereby encourage themselves or others in superstitious imaginations.

As to the best time for the celebration of the Holy Communion, we have no hard-and-fast rule, and there is no question of principle involved, at whatever hour it is celebrated. Personally I prefer the early morning hour, for then I can best approach the Lord's table with freshest powers of soul, and with least distraction, and all will admit that there is a quiet and calm about the early morning hours which is very helpful to some minds ; further, getting up early is doubtless for many an act of self-denial, which has its own reward ; but I cannot forget that the hour of

institution was after the evening meal, and the practice of the early Church in the Apostolic age was certainly evening Communion. To my mind the candles which appear on many of our Communion tables bear witness to the original practice of holding the Sacrament in the evening; but we know that, owing to abuses and disorder, such as St. Paul rebuked at Corinth, the Church changed the time to early morning in the second century.

In all controversies and disputes on these details it would be well if we remembered that the Sacrament was made for man and not man for the Sacrament.

4. It remains for us to consider very briefly the idea of INCORPORATION, which is common to the two Sacraments. In Baptism we are made members of Christ's Church; by Holy Communion we receive further the assurance of "being very members incorporate in the mystical Body of God's Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." It is only in Sacramental union with Christ that the Christian can be what he ought to be as a Christian. The more closely the Lord's Supper connects the members of the Christian fellowship with Christ, the more does it become itself the actual centre of that

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fellowship ; for here is the Love proclaimed which is the foundation of all corporate life, which binds men together in families and Churches and nations. We are to draw near, not only as Sons of God, but as brothers to all men, for in the Sacrament we are united in Christ to all Christ's people.

Fellowship is the gift of the Holy Spirit ; the only real way to bridge class-divisions and the like is to bring men together under the inspiration of a common ideal. Now for most men there is no link with our fellow-men because we have no fellowship of the Holy Ghost, no sense that we belong to one another because we all belong to Him. To be worshippers at the same altar is, alas ! not enough to draw us to one another, because our worship is something laid over the surface of our lives and not something bursting from our inmost depths. Concerning this state of things St. Paul would well say "*I speak this to your shame*" ; for truly at the Lord's table we publicly declare our union and fellowship with each other, as well as with the Lord, and in both cases this is a progressive union.

Fellowship with Christ we need, if we would escape from the doom of all earthly things. A true and really blessed Com-

munion is a realisation of Divine fellowship. His victorious Death "has broken every barrier down." As fellow workers with God, as fellow soldiers of the Great Captain of our Salvation, we have direct personal access to Him.

Fellowship with our brother-man we need, if we would realize the Fatherhood of God ; for it is only as members of a brotherhood that we can claim to receive the great privileges.

It is the faith and hope and brotherly love within the souls of those who join in the feast that make the bread and the wine the body and blood of Christ. Where these are, there a consecrating touch has passed over the material elements of bread and wine. Christ abides in the hearts of those who love Him, and, where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst.

Our Church forbids a Celebration unless three or four are gathered together, and a solitary Communion is rightly impossible, for, as I have tried to show, it is our response to the revelation of Fatherhood and Brotherhood. There is a deep mystery about our relation to our fellow-men, and we must feel that we should understand this mystery

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better if we loved God and our neighbour as He loves us both. It is a misuse of sonship if brotherhood is ignored.

A man whose life is not offered to God in practical service has certainly not received into himself the Life of Christ. But if that Life of Love and Service has taken possession of us, we are thereby knit to all others who share it, whether in this world or in the great beyond.

And this life means joy and success; it satisfies the travail of our Saviour's soul, for He desires Communion. He wants us to look away from ourselves to Himself, and to find such joy in Him that we may go forth and live joyous lives "to catch men," our brothers in Christ.

5. The final point to notice is that it is also a PLEDGE. A pledge of the promise, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*"; a pledge to the Christian of his forgiveness by God, and of his being a living member of His kingdom on earth, as well as of the promise of eternal life.

The Christian when he receives the Holy Communion pledges himself to make his life a living sacrifice to God; he transacts the forms ordained by Christ Himself, by which

that pledge is ratified on his part, and by which the promised grace is confirmed to him by God.

In conclusion, let me say very emphatically that we neglect these ordinances at our peril. How can we disobey our Lord's commands without virtually rejecting our allegiance to Him? In the early days of the faith a Christian was always a communicant. Exclusion from the Lord's table was the bitterest loss and disgrace which a man could suffer, and voluntary withdrawal from it could never have entered anyone's mind; it would have been more impossible than voluntary exile from his home and family. The Master's command constrained, and the Master's promise encouraged men. They could not stay away with the tender words ringing in their ears, "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*"

Do not let any make the excuse that they are unworthy to come to the Lord's table. To be unworthy is quite a different thing from receiving unworthily. The more unworthy we feel ourselves to be, provided this conviction of our sinfulness bring us to Christ, the more worthily we shall receive the Lord's Supper. The very best are unworthy; only

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those who are deeply conscious of their own unworthiness can communicate with any real propriety : each time we approach the Holy Table we use the words, " We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies." St. Paul's words in this connexion are often misunderstood, when he writes, "*we eat and drink unworthily if we discern not the body,*" He means that the "*Body*" which we are to "*discern*" to be worthy communicants is the body of the whole human race. Humanity is the body of God.

So the condition of a worthy reception of the Holy Communion is not only a longing for close personal contact with our Saviour ; it is also a recognition of that mystic oneness that knits the race in which God has expressed Himself, into a unity far closer than brotherhood.

Those who neglect their Lord's command forfeit the greatest blessing of their lives. It is not for nothing that Christ has ordained that the chief means of union with Himself should have the outward form of food ; for as our physical life is renewed regularly by physical food, so the spiritual life is to be communicated to us by Christ.

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I fail to see how any can escape the consciousness of guilt, or live a Christian life, without entering by faith into the communion of that Life which is offered to us in the Holy Communion.

To-day the fullness of our lives demands that they should be wholly consecrated to God; and they can only be consecrated in union with Christ, and by the keeping of His commands.

“Oh, let our adoration for all that He hath done,
Peal out beyond the stars of God, while voice and life
are one!

And let our consecration be real, and deep, and true,
Oh, even now our hearts shall bow, and joyful vows
renew!

“In glad and full surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly, and only, and evermore to be!
O Son of God, Who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are, and all we have, shall henceforth be
Thine own!”

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